

Endo and Kobayashi
THE LATEST ON TSUNDERE VILLAINESS
LIESELOTTE

Live!

Disc
[Ex]

Author
Suzu Enoshima
Illustrator
Eihi





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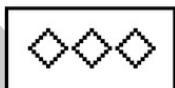
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Prologue: With the Tsundere Villainess Lieselotte

I first heard the Voices of the Gods in spring roughly a year ago. These voices belonged to two deities from a foreign realm who had now become my friends: the Play-by-Play Caster Endo and the Color Commentator Kobayashi.

They had advised me on the inner feelings of my fiancée, Lieselotte, with whom my relationship had grown somewhat awkward, and the doom she would eventually meet if nothing were to change. In the future they had foreseen, the Witch of Yore had weakened Lieselotte, possessed her, and then she had attempted to destroy Fiene, our country, and the entire world.

Guided by these gods from another realm, I established a bond with Lieselotte, and with the support of my love (though it's rather embarrassing to describe it as such), she was able to dispel the Witch of Yore's darkness and revive the witch's original form: Lireнна, the Goddess of Creation.

With the aid of Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi, Lireнна successfully sealed away the evil god Kuon, who had been operating behind the scenes to capture Fiene. No one was lost in this regret-and sorrow-free Happy End to End All Happy Ends, achieved through the guidance of our two otherworldly gods.

Those were the events leading up to this auspicious day: the day Lieselotte and I were to be wed. Thanks to Lireнна's Goddess of Creation powers, we were even joined by Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi, who I hadn't seen in quite a while—or rather, ever, since this was our first time meeting in person. In our hearts, it was a reunion between friends.

The schedule for the day was as follows: in the morning, we would exchange vows at the church. Then there would be a lunch break, followed by a parade from the church to the royal palace. We would then hold a tea party and wedding reception there in the afternoon.

Having just completed the ceremony at the church, we were about to make our way back to the palace with the parade when Lireнна requested to publicly

bless our marriage—and show off her revival—by scattering flowers from the back of Lieselotte and my carriage. This required adjustments to the security detail and such, so Lieselotte and I were now waiting in the church anteroom.

On the other hand, Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi, who I actually would have loved to have accompany us, requested to go to the palace as discreetly as possible, so a separate carriage was being prepared for them. It would likely take a while longer, so the two of them joined us in the anteroom for a pleasant chat.

“You know, there’s something I’m curious about,” Lord Endo said. “Some of the people cheering outside were going, ‘Happy birthday, Your Royal Highness!’ Did you hear it too?”

Lady Kobayashi’s eyes widened. “Wait, is today April 7th over here?!”

The answer to both of their questions was “yes.” Seeing the passion in their eyes as they asked, I was touched they knew my date of birth as if it were a matter of course. I nodded firmly. “Yes. The wedding was going to fall near my birthday, and since both are ceremonies the public will inevitably gather for, we decided to hold them on the same day.”

“So today is also Sieg’s nineteenth birthday,” Lieselotte said from beside me. She smiled at me. “Happy birthday again, Sieg.”

“Thank you.” I smiled back.

“Cool! Happy birthday, Sieg!” Lord Endo said.

“Yeah, happy birthday! Wait, but doesn’t this mean your wedding anniversary will always conflict with your birthday from now on? Isn’t it kinda sad you and Liese-tan won’t have the day to yourselves?” Lady Kobayashi asked.

I froze. *Was it a bad idea?* My birthday had always been made into a public event with a ceremony, a ball, and so on. It’d be difficult to spend that day alone with Lieselotte even though it would also be our anniversary. I started to worry I’d been inconsiderate.

“No,” Lieselotte said, reassuring me with a soft smile. “If we take into consideration the burden on the subjects and retainers, I believe this was the best decision. I, too, am becoming a member of the royal family, and I am

aware that occasions which are typically spent with family will now be public events. If anything, I feel blessed our subjects will celebrate our special day with us.”

“Thank you, Liese. Nothing makes me happier than knowing you’re so prepared to be by my side.” I smiled back at her again.

“Wh-What? I-I’m only doing what’s expected of me.” She blushed and quickly averted her gaze.

“Whew, Liese-tan isn’t just adorable; she’s gallant! Man, Sieg really scored himself a great wife!”

“Shihono, I can’t tell if you’re acting like their mother, a relative, or a nosy neighbor.” Lord Endo gave his excited companion a strained smile. “Well, I do agree with what she’s saying. I’m happy for you, Sieg.”

I smiled bashfully at their warm words of congratulation.

Then, Lady Kobayashi clapped her hands together as if she’d just remembered something. “Oh, speaking of, on Liese-tan’s birthday last year, she said something about how she was gonna put a lot of effort into Sieg’s next birthday! I get it now. He got the cutest birthday present ever, huh?” Lady Kobayashi flashed a mischievous grin.

Lord Endo grinned too. “Yeah, she’s right. Receiving such a beautiful and capable wife is the birthday present to end all birthday presents.”

“N-No, that’s not true!” Lieselotte stammered. “Well, yes, I do belong to Sieg now, but that was decided over a decade ago! So, um...!” Her face had turned bright red, either from the gods’ compliments or from the thought of belonging to me.

I gently wrapped an arm around her shoulder to calm her down. “I’m very blessed to take Liese as my wife, but she is not a ‘thing’ to be given as a birthday present, nor do I feel that I have unilaterally received her. It’s a two-way relationship.”

“Sieg...” She murmured my name with tears in her eyes.

I was feeling sort of embarrassed at this point, but I disregarded it and looked

straight into Lieselotte's eyes. "Well, formally speaking, you *have* been received by the royal family. However, as husband and wife, even if we are bound to our hierarchy in public, we should be equals at home, no? If you are mine, then I am yours. So I'm not going to be conceited and say I 'received' you."

"Man, this kind of relationship is nice."

"It's something to aspire to, huh?"

The sighing voices of the two gods, who Lieselotte and I had inadvertently forgotten about as we gazed into each other's eyes, reached our ears. Not only had they witnessed our romantic exchange in all its glory, they had praised it.

"Wh— I— Th— Ughhh!" Lieselotte stammered in embarrassment, looking like she could burst into tears at any moment.

"Oh, right! So what *did* you end up getting Sieg for his birthday, Liese-tan?"

"I'm curious too. If only we'd known, we would've brought something as well."

Lady Kobayashi and Lord Endo changed the subject in a rather obvious manner.

Wanting to boast about the gifts I had received from my wife, I answered in her stead. "Lieselotte gave me a pocket square she embroidered herself and a matching handkerchief for everyday use. Well, she also gave me a separate pocket square for evening parties and two spare handkerchiefs, so there are five pieces in all." I took out the delicately embroidered pocket square tucked into my suit and unfolded it for them to see.

"Wow, it's so pretty!" Lady Kobayashi said. "You did this by hand, Liese-tan? With needle and thread?! Are you a professional?! That's our girl!"

"That's some serious craftsmanship. You made *five* of these? You weren't kidding when you said you were gonna put a lot of effort into your present."

Lady Kobayashi and Lord Endo looked extremely impressed. It was only natural. I also felt I'd received something incredible.

"You did so much for me even though you had to prepare for the wedding as well," I said. "I'll be hard-pressed to find an adequate return gift. I really am

happy, though. Thank you for the wonderful present, Liese.”

Lieselotte blushed and looked down, seeming terribly embarrassed. The gods’ praise had likely contributed to that.

“I-It’s not that amazing. This level of embroidery is nothing more than a lady’s pastime. It didn’t take *that* much effort...”

“She’s lying. Knowing Liese-tan, she spent three months making those.”

“Huh?!”

“There’s no way Lieselotte, whose love burns intensely even by Riefenstahl standards, would give her beloved Sieg something subpar,” Lord Endo said. “Remember the ribbon she made? How many practice runs do you think she did?”

“Huuuh?!?!”

“The ribbons had a fixed design and she already had some experience making her own, but it *still* took her that long to make yours. This time, it’s a new design, and she made *five*. It wouldn’t be strange if she started work on them right after her own birthday.”

“Waaaah?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!”

I was so accustomed to Lady Kobayashi’s analysis and Lord Endo’s play-by-play that their commentary felt wonderfully nostalgic, but that wasn’t the case for Lieselotte. In fact, this was her first time actually hearing them expose her in their commentator modes.

She looked at them nervously, muffled sounds escaping her lips. “A-Are the gods all-knowing?!”

Oh, she exploded.

...Am I a terrible person for thinking that? But I see... So she did spend an enormous amount of time and effort on this birthday present. I’m touched by the extent of her love, but at the same time, I feel bad.

“Thank you so much, Liese. However, please don’t do this kind of thing again. I’ll gratefully accept them this time since it’s also our once-in-a-lifetime wedding, but I don’t want to burden you. Next year, you can buy something and

give it to me as-is.”

For some reason, my proposal was met with shock. Lieselotte trembled. “B-But...how could a suitable gift for Your Royal Highness *possibly* be sold anywhere? Oh, perhaps I could find a small villa...”

“All right, let’s also decide on a budget ceiling, the types of stores you can buy from, and the area boundaries. We’ll discuss it in detail later.”

“Very well. Let’s...discuss it.” Lieselotte acquiesced, albeit reluctantly.

I sighed in relief. *I’ll also have to prohibit her from opening a store within that valid area, whether run by herself or a relative, or else she’ll be able to purchase ridiculously high-end products, curios from a distant land, or her own handmade items, and claim they were within budget. Just to be sure, I’ll have a civil servant check for loopholes and write a formal agreement.*

“Heeey, Aoto, I really think we should give Sieg something for his birthday.”

“Believe me, I want to. But we don’t have any of this world’s currency, so we can’t just go out and buy something for him.”

While I was internally strengthening my resolve, Lady Kobayashi and Lord Endo sighed. I couldn’t help but chuckle at their lamentations.

“Kobayashi, Endo, you already came all this way today. That’s the best present I could ever ask for. Well, if I’m allowed to be selfish, I’d like to have a little more time to chat with you.”

“Aw, you sure?”

“We’re gods, so it’s not selfish unless you demand our blessing or something, right?”

The two deities looked troubled. They glanced at each other and nodded.

“Honestly, I do wanna at least give him our blessing. But how do we do that?” Lady Kobayashi mused.

“No idea. Should we ask Lirennia to teach us the ropes?”

“Oh, no, you don’t need to do that,” I said. “Besides, my family has already received the ability to hear the Voices of the Gods, so it may be difficult to

receive another blessing on top of that.”

“Now that you mention it, no one born to the royal family has ever received a blessing from any deity besides Lirennia, the Goddess of Creation,” Lieselotte said. “There aren’t many people who have received a divine blessing to begin with...”

“Ohhh, is that why we couldn’t bless Sieg or Fiene no matter how much we prayed?”

“I honestly feel equally attached to Sieg, Lieselotte, Fiene, and Baldur. So maybe it’s *that* kind of system issue?”

Lady Kobayashi and Lord Endo tilted their heads in unison.

I smiled and nodded. “I’m sure that’s it. I know you both truly care about us. I can’t express how much you’ve already helped me, even if it wasn’t in the form of a divine blessing. That I was able to hear your voices from another realm was a miracle in and of itself, and I’m sincerely happy we were able to establish this friendship.”

The pair fidgeted, embarrassed.

“Aww, you’re making me blush! Don’t be so stiff and formal.”

“Yeah, be more casual, like, ‘We’re friends, so don’t worry about it!’ Oh, it might sound friendlier if you call us by our first names. I’m Aoto.”

“And I’m Shihono! You do it too, Liese-tan!”

“Er, I don’t think it would be right to address gods *that* casually...” I said, hesitant.

“I’m afraid I shall have to refrain...” Lieselotte, too, was reluctant.

Suddenly, Lord Endo held his palm out towards us as if to stop us. “Oh, but wait. I’m happy to be called by my first name, but I don’t really want Sieg calling Shihono by hers. She was a *Magikoi* player and a Sieg fan, even if she shipped him with Lieselotte.”

“Ha ha, look who’s jealous! I think Aoto still has some misconceptions about otome games. Well, I get it’s normal to feel conflicted when your SO’s getting along with another guy. But hey, that means there’s no problem if I get

fanservice from Liese-tan instead, since we're both girls! C'mon, Liese-tan, call me Shihono!"

"Pretty much. C'mon, Sieg, call me Aoto."

"Um... A-Aoto...sir."

"Sh-Shiho... No, I really cannot address a god so casually. Please allow me a little time to mentally prepare myself."

I managed to muster up the courage to say his name, but I couldn't stop myself from adding a formality at the end. Meanwhile, Lieselotte gave up midsentence. I didn't blame her.

"You guys are so serious," Lord Endo said with a strained smile. "We're not that important. Shihono'd be on cloud nine if Lieselotte were to call her by her first name, 'cause she sees it as fanservice. Oh, do you know what fanservice is? Basically, it's doing something that makes your fans—in this case, Shihono—really happy."

Lieselotte nodded, looking awkward. "If it will make her happy... Well, um, I will work towards it."

I averted my gaze from Lady Kobayashi, whose eyes were now sparkling in anticipation, and cleared my throat. "Yes, that's right. We'll take it step by step. Now, where were we? Oh, yes. If you wish to do something for my birthday, please join me and Lieselotte in our garden for tea later. I'd love to talk more with you."

Unfortunately, I was hearing a lot of noise outside the door. I had a feeling our pleasant chat was about to end, hence my invitation.

Lady Kobayashi and Lord Endo beamed.

"We'd love to!" Lady Kobayashi said. "A tea party in a garden sounds like fun! I wanna reminisce about stuff!"

"A lot happened this past year, huh? And we haven't seen each other in a while, so I also wanna find out what happened while we were away."

The pair nodded firmly.

I smiled back and said, "I'm glad to hear that. In that case, let's have tea after

the parade. Oh, but Lieselotte will be changing her dress, so I suppose we'll have to leave her for a bit."

"Oh yeah, it'd be hard to relax in the garden in that fancy dress." Lady Kobayashi's expression darkened and turned serious. "Um, by the way, have you already decided what dress you'll be changing into?"

Lieselotte and I tilted our heads. I had indeed given my wife a dress to wear to today's tea party, but based on the way Lady Kobayashi was asking, perhaps it would have been better if it were still undecided?

"Sorry, guys." Lord Endo wore a resigned look. "Shihono's a total Lieselotte fanatic."

"Um, you can just ignore me if you've already picked something, but I *really* wanna see the dress Liese-tan wore to school; like, the fan in me is thinking that, since I get to meet the real Liese-tan in the flesh, I also wanna see the *actual* outfit she wears in the game! Please! If it's at all possible!" Lady Kobayashi stared with pleading eyes.

Lieselotte gave me an inquiring glance, to which I nodded.

"Indeed, I hadn't decided what I was going to wear, so I shall change into the dress I wear to school when we return to the castle. That one would certainly be appropriate for afternoon tea in the garden."

Yes, that must be the right choice.

"Woohoo!" Lady Kobayashi jumped up and down in joy and excitement.

"Glad it worked out." Lord Endo looked at Lady Kobayashi with gentle, satisfied eyes.

If Lieselotte's response made the two of them *this* happy, then it didn't bother me at all that the dress I'd given her had been rendered meaningless. That was why I had given my approval just now. But, well, to be honest, I was a *little* jealous that Lieselotte had prioritized Lady Kobayashi over me. It wasn't that I felt neglected, but I did feel a similar sense of loneliness and hurt.

It is my birthday, after all.

Chapter 1: Let the Tea Party Begin

After the parade, we arrived at the castle and went to the garden near the royal family's living quarters. I was now at the tea table with Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi, who were sitting close together.

The two of them had informed me that despite being called gods here, they were mere commoners in their own realm. Upon entering the castle, they had been extremely nervous.

"You called it your garden, but it's actually a huge garden in a grand castle. I feel cheated," Lord Endo said.

I felt sorry I hadn't properly set their expectations. The pair had also seemed uncomfortable with the guards and servants, so I had all of them leave after getting the tea party set up.

After a while, Lady Kobayashi asked softly, "Hey, Sieg, are you *sure* you wanna spend your wedding day having tea with us?" She had finally stopped trembling, but her face was still pale.

Next to her, Lord Endo nodded. "Isn't this the time for welcoming the foreign leaders who came to your wedding? I feel bad for interrupting your official duties, or whatever that falls under. I really think you should go do that. You don't have to worry about us."

For some reason, he spoke in a whisper. Well, it was likely because he was still intimidated by the atmosphere of the castle.

The two of them looked at each other and nodded in agreement, still shrinking back in their seats.

I smiled. "My parents are taking care of that, so please do not worry. Besides, there is no person in the world, noble or royal, who would want to be prioritized over gods. If we were to leave you in order to greet our guests, they would only feel ashamed."

"Hey, Sieg, you're being all stiff and formal again," Lady Kobayashi

complained.

I felt bad for upsetting her, but at the same time, I was relieved that she had regained some of her usual pep.

“Ah, sorry.” I lowered my head.

“Wait, your parents are the king and the queen, right?” Lord Endo said. “We should feel ashamed for causing them trouble...”

“Gods of foreign realms are held in very high regard, though. After all, even I, the crown prince, need to make a conscious effort to drop the formalities with you. What’s more, Lieselotte and I owe our marriage to you, and today may be our only chance to speak with you face-to-face. It’s only natural we would prioritize you over all else, isn’t it?”

The two of them nodded in response to my words of persuasion, but their faces remained uneasy. Then—

“I hear the Goddess Lirenna will be attending that party. The Goddess of Creation—who has not appeared in our world for a very long time—is far more important to the foreign ambassadors than the crown prince and his wife, who they can meet whenever they visit this country. A tea party with the Goddess is such a momentous event, they’ll forget they came here today for our wedding ceremony. They may not even notice we aren’t there.”

The dignified voice coming from behind me made Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi’s faces light up.

“I see,” Lord Endo said. “I dunno if that’s a good thing, but I’ll take the peace of mind!”

“Liese-tan! You finished changing!”

I turned around to see the recipient of Lady Kobayashi’s cheerful waving. It was my beloved fiancée—no, *wife*—Lieselotte, who had changed into her dress for the tea party.

“I love it! You were super pretty in the wedding dress too, but with these clothes, you really look like *the* Liese-tan! I never thought I’d get to see this with my own two eyes!” Lady Kobayashi was beside herself with excitement.

Lieselotte, who was wearing the dress she usually wore to school, blushed and lowered her head slightly. “Th-Thank you...”

Yep, she’s adorable. Really adorable, but...

As she took her seat next to me, I looked at her with mixed feelings. If I had uttered Lady Kobayashi’s words, Lieselotte would have scolded me, saying, “Don’t say that in front of others!”

Yet here she was, accepting the compliment and blushing cutely. The sadness and jealousy I’d been stricken with when she had decided on this dress was threatening to flare up again.

“Careful, Sieg. In the game, you always had a perfect, princely smile, but ever since you started hearing our voices, you’ve been making some pretty funny faces.”

Lord Endo’s exasperated words of caution made me hurriedly massage my cheeks back into my usual “princely” smile. *At least, I think so. It’s probably fine.*

I mean, although I want to tense up at the sight of Lieselotte and Lady Kobayashi in their own little world, with my wife embarrassed yet happy from the goddess’s enthusiastic praise, I’d say I’m good at controlling my facial expressions. It was part of my education. Yes.

Then again, I do suspect some of my ways of conduct have fallen apart ever since I was shot through the heart by Lieselotte’s cuteness.

“I think it’s better this way. He feels more alive! Now that I know the current Sieg, the one in the game feels too diplomatic and dry, especially early on. I bet Liese-tan also prefers this expressive Sieg over the one who gives everyone the same unreadable archaic smile, right?”

Lieselotte flinched at the sudden question regarding me. “Huh?! Well, Sieg’s careful diplomatic expression is the result of his hard work, so I think it is deserving of respect. However...perhaps...I feel a little happy...at the thought I can make that expression crumble.”

“Liese! Yes, my love for you overpowers my control over my expressions. You’re the only person in the world who can move my heart like this, Lieselotte.”

“E-Enough! Please do not make that lovestruck face! It harms your dignity!” she exclaimed, blushing and looking away. The rest of us smiled.

Indeed, she is utterly adorable. When we’re alone, she’s a bit more honest with her feelings, and I do love that sweet side of her very much, but her prickly side is also delightful.

Now that she had officially transitioned from the daughter of a marquis to the crown princess, she didn’t have to speak formally to me in front of others, yet she still did. She was serious to the point it was awkward, and I thought that was adorable too.

Not just I, but Lord Endo, Lady Kobayashi, and even the Goddess of Creation Lireнна had all told her she could be more casual with us, but she had maintained her formal air nonetheless.

“Liese-tan’s cute this way, so I guess it’s fine,” Lady Kobayashi had said.

She was right.

“Hey, Sieg, you said there was gonna be a ball tonight. Will both of you be changing outfits for it?” Lady Kobayashi asked, interrupting my moment of appreciation for Lieselotte’s “tsun” side, which I felt like I hadn’t seen in quite a while.

“Yes, we’ll be changing into the clothes we had prepared for the ball. Well, as a man, my outfit won’t be considerably different. Since we will be dancing, however, Lieselotte will be wearing a different type of dress than before. Her evening dress is white like her wedding dress was, but the extensive gold embroidery gives it a very different feel.”

“Oh, that’s *your* color! Yep, you guys are totally in love. Is the gold going to sparkle in the light? That sounds like it’ll be really pretty. Oh, and you’ll be *dancing* together! The ball itself sounds like it’ll be amazing too... I hope we can stick around that long...” Lady Kobayashi’s mood changed from excited to sad as she spoke.

Lord Endo gently rubbed her shoulder. “It’s a miracle we’ve been able to stay here so long in the first place. If there’s a time limit, we’ll just have to accept it, right? From the sound of it, Lireнна didn’t just *bring* us here; she *created* an

opportunity for us to have a nice, long chat with Sieg and Lieselotte.”

“Yeah, I know. I’m really grateful to Lireнна. I get it, but I can’t stop wanting more...and I can’t help but think that if I say my wishes out loud, they might come true.”

“Well, you have a point. We’re gods, after all! We made cherry blossoms grow before, so maybe we’ll be able to get a glimpse of the ball too!”

“Yeah! C’mon, god powers! Even if Lireнна’s strength isn’t enough, let us hold out until the evening ball!”

They laughed as they joked around, and Lieselotte and I found ourselves laughing along.

“By the way, there’s something I’ve been curious about for a while now,” Lord Endo said, perhaps wanting to change the subject to something less likely to turn solemn. “Is the thing in Lieselotte’s hands *Lieselotte’s Memoir*, by any chance?”

“Hm? Um, yes, it is my diary, although it does not have such an official-sounding name. Lady Kobayashi mentioned wanting to reminisce, so I brought it, thinking it would be useful for retracing past events,” Lieselotte said, placing the book on the table.

Lady Kobayashi’s eyes widened in astonishment. She stood, her chair rattling, and went up to Lieselotte and the book.

“Oh my gosh, it’s...it’s the real thing! It’s *L-L-L-Lieselotte’s Memoir*! Which means it’s a version that covers the Happy End to End All Happy Ends, right?! It’s different from the ultra-dark and depressing *Lieselotte’s Memoir* that was released in our world! Oh man, I wanna see how much has changed!”



“C-Calm down, Shihono! Back off a little! I know you’re excited, but you’re scaring her!” Lord Endo shouted, getting up and coming over to our end of the table.

Lieselotte herself seemed stunned rather than afraid. “You don’t mean to say that my diary was published in your world...?”

“That’s right! Sorry for reading it without permission, Liese-tan! But it wasn’t the one you have there. It was a completely different version. Oh, but then again, I guess everything up to the point where our voices reached Sieg would be the same?”

“It was Kuon’s doing, then? Curse that evil god!” Lieselotte said with sheer malice. “Oh, and there is absolutely no reason for you to apologize, Lady Shihono,” she added, softening her expression.

Lady Kobayashi clutched her chest as if an arrow had been shot through it. “Ahh! Thank you for calling me by my first name! Such courteous fanservice! I’d expect no less from the best tsundere villainess ever. And while you’re being so amazing, do you mind if I see that diary?”

“Shihono, don’t take advantage of her distress to sneak in a bold request...”

“I know she’ll say no, but I feel like I’ll regret it a lot if I don’t ask. I wanna see it so much I don’t care if I’m being annoying or shameless.”

“I get how you feel. Honestly, I want to see it too.”

Lieselotte was taken aback by Lady Kobayashi and Lord Endo’s frank conversation. “Wh-What?! E-Even if it is a request from the gods, I did not write this with the intent of showing it to others. Oh, but in a way, I suppose people have already seen it, have they not?”

Lady Kobayashi nodded apologetically. “Yeah, sorry. I don’t know how much has changed, but I’ve read the game’s version of *Lieselotte’s Memoir* so many times I can recite it from memory. March 26: There will soon be a great flood in the western part of the country, as prophesied by—”

“I’m convinced,” Lieselotte said. “That is my diary, word for word. I see... So it

has already been read. It has even been memorized.” Judging from her expression, this was a bitter pill to swallow.

“No, um, it was partly because I wanted to see if there was any way to save you,” Lady Kobayashi said quickly. “I had to read the material thoroughly if I was gonna write fanfics about it.”

“Sorry, you probably have no idea what she’s talking about,” Lord Endo said before she could continue. “Basically, Shihono loves you more than you could ever imagine. Just know that she was really worried about you and prayed for your happiness. Also, sorry, I read *Lieselotte’s Memoir* too. Now that I think about it, reading someone’s diary without permission is a pretty big invasion of privacy, huh...”

“No, um, it’s Kuon’s fault, so there’s no need to apologize. But... But... That doesn’t stop it from being embarrassing...” Lieselotte replied, looking awkward.

I decided to add my own two cents. “Lady Kobayashi’s deep understanding of your feelings aided me greatly. For her to know you so well, she must’ve truly cared about you and tried to empathize with you. I’m sure the Witch of Yore appeared in your diary as well. Lady Kobayashi learned everything she could about you, and I believe we’re only here today because of her sound advice.”

“Y-Yes, that is very true. In order to fight a battle, one must know their enemy. That is another reason why apologies are unnecessary, and I should not be embarrassed either. It also seems I have caused quite a great deal of concern, and above all, I’m sure a god would have the ability to see into my diary’s contents regardless. Very well, then.” Lieselotte took a deep breath and looked straight at Lady Kobayashi. “I do not mind showing it to Lady Shihono, but only to her,” she declared, cheeks flushed. For some reason, she was not holding the diary towards me.

“Lieselotte, am I not allowed to see it?” I asked, perplexed.

“Of course not, Sieg,” Lord Endo answered in her stead. “Shihono’s fine because she’s an outsider, in a way. It’d be really awkward to have someone read what you wrote about them regardless of whether it was good or bad, right? You were Lieselotte’s fiancé, so there’s no way she didn’t write about you.”

“I see.” I nodded.

Lord Endo leaned towards me and continued in a low whisper, “Even in the original *Lieselotte’s Memoir*, she wrote about how much she loves you. Now that it’s the super happy version where the two of you are married, it’s probably chock full of her expressions of love. You can’t expect her to ever let you see that, right?”

I see. There’s no need to be jealous of Lady Kobayashi, then.

“Let’s switch seats, then!” Lady Kobayashi said. “We can’t have you guys seeing her diary! Liese-tan and I will sit next to each other, and Aoto and Sieg will sit on the other side!”

Since Lieselotte had been giving Lady Kobayashi her diary and Lord Endo had been whispering in my ear, we were already standing in those pairs. We went to our seats as told.

“Sorry, man. It’s your wedding day but you have to sit next to me instead of your bride,” Lord Endo said.

I smiled. “No, I don’t mind. Lieselotte will be living in this castle from now on. I’ll have plenty of opportunities to have her to myself in the future.” That was why something as private as Lieselotte’s diary had been in the castle in the first place.

“Oh, look who’s confident.” Lord Endo grinned and poked my shoulder. “I’m glad things are going well for you guys.”

I gave him a wholehearted smile. Aside from Al, there weren’t many people who would be this friendly to me. A friend like Lord Endo was hard to come by, so I wasn’t the least bit disappointed to be sitting next to him.

“We couldn’t have done it without you,” I said. “Really, everything is thanks to you and Kobayashi. Thank you, Aoto.”

“Wow, that’s blinding. A real prince’s smile is a force to be reckoned with,” he murmured.

My smile became a bit strained at that. It was sort of embarrassing to receive such strange praise from a friend. *Then again, I certainly am a prince. If that’s*

how I come across, then my younger self is being rewarded for his efforts. I won't let those words bother me.

Lord Endo cleared his throat, seeming to have regained his composure at the same time as me. "Sorry, that was a weird thing to say. Well, you do tend to be too honest and serious. You used to take words at face value, which didn't help when Lieselotte was being hard to understand. And then there was the Witch of Yore's interference, right? It's like the whole world was getting in the way of your romance."

"He's right," Lady Kobayashi added, nodding. "You're better now, but early on, as in last spring, I was pretty nervous. I kept asking myself, 'Is this gonna work out?! Are they gonna be okay?!'"

I lowered my head again. If I were allowed to give an excuse, it would be that at the time, I had believed that my marriage to Lieselotte was a foregone conclusion. Even if we hadn't been on the same page, I was sure that over the course of getting married, living together, and spending years at each other's side, she would eventually come to accept me. To put it bluntly, I had let down my guard.

So the version of me that Lady Kobayashi and Lord Endo knew from the "game" must've been...

"The Witch of Yore's interference...began in early spring?" Lieselotte murmured in amazement, interrupting my descent into regret for my cowardice and gratitude towards the gods.

Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi exchanged looks.

Lady Kobayashi nodded, seeming to have made up her mind, and began speaking in an extremely nonchalant tone, likely on purpose. "Oh, yeah. Lieselotte, after starting school at the academy, have you ever said or done anything so unbelievable you couldn't understand why you'd done it? It was all part of the witch's interference. I just want you to know it wasn't your fault at all."

"Y-Yes, I have. Thank you...? However, even before enrolling, I was already experiencing that to an extent. I feel it happened more often afterwards, though, because I had more opportunities to see Sieg. I wish I could do something about my nature, but alas..."

“Yeah, that’s part of it too. You’re shy to begin with,” Lady Kobayashi said. “You have high standards and a strong sense of responsibility, so you tend to blame yourself. But the witch would’ve added fuel to the fire and made other people’s actions—especially Sieg’s—seem even worse. Didn’t you think Sieg hated you? And don’t you remember your magic being twisted in ways you didn’t intend?”

Lieselotte let out a shocked gasp. So did I, in fact.

“Are you referring to the water spell she used in the courtyard back in May?” I asked softly.

Lord Endo nodded firmly. “That’s the one. Well, I do think part of it was ‘cause she was panicking, like she said. But it was probably the witch’s fault it ended up being *that* big. Magic was originally power that belonged to gods, right? The Witch of Yore was the ruined form of Lireнна, one of the original gods of this world, so she would’ve easily been able to manipulate people’s magic.”

“Based on what we read in the memoir, it was definitely the witch’s fault,” Lady Kobayashi said. “But Lireнна fell into darkness out of jealousy and despair, and her nature was twisted from all the negative emotions she was exposed to over the years. It’s hard to say for sure who’s to blame. Oh, but it’s clear who saved the day: Liese-tan who purified her. It was all thanks to her and Sieg’s love.”

“Absolutely.”

The two nodded to each other.

“L-Lady Shihono, Lord Endo, please don’t joke around,” Lieselotte said. “We were going to reminisce on the past, were we not?! If I’m not mistaken, the water spell you’re referring to is the one I cast on Fiene, isn’t it?” She was likely trying to change the subject out of embarrassment.

“Yep, and then you and Sieg went on a shopping date to find an apology gift for her!” Lady Kobayashi said with a radiant smile.

Indeed. Lieselotte may remember it as the day she committed a horrible transgression, but the gods and I see it as a sweet memory of her adorable ways.

It was May, around the time when the greenery was making more of an impression than the flowers, and the lingering cold of winter was more or less gone.

One day after class, I was walking down a corridor to go to the school library when I heard what sounded like a large quantity of water splashing onto something with great force. A woman's scream rang out at almost the same time.

"Eeek!"

What happened?

I looked in the direction of the scream and the splash, the source of which wound up being the courtyard. One of my friends, Fiene, was standing there dumbfounded, holding a wand while she was completely drenched in water. Behind her was my fiancée, Lieselotte, also holding a wand and looking stunned. Even though she herself wasn't wet, she had a much more horrified expression on her face as she looked at the poor soaked girl.

I froze for a few moments as I tried to make sense of what I was seeing.

"Hey, what was that noise?!"

The student shouting as he rushed to the scene from behind me was Baldur Riefenstahl, Lieselotte's cousin and a knight-in-training.

Lieselotte seemed to regain her composure upon seeing her cousin's face. She straightened her back and announced, rather brazenly, "I splashed water on Fiene."

"Why would you do that, Liese?!" Baldur asked, approaching her as if he were going to grab her.

She didn't flinch as she glared back at him.

They were being so hostile that I intervened without thinking. "H-Hey!"

The two extremely loyal Riefenstahls immediately bowed to me, startled.

"At ease. Now, what happened here? Seeing as Miss Fiene and Lieselotte

both have their wands out, may I assume they were sparring?”

Baldur’s fury vanished in an instant. If they had been having a mock duel, then Lieselotte had done nothing wrong. He could accept that. Unfortunately...

“No? Why would I be sparring with Miss Fiene? As you can see, there is no referee here either. Miss Fiene is holding her wand because she was practicing magic by herself. Then I surprised her by splashing her with a water spell,” Lieselotte declared, with an air of nonchalance.

“Why would you be so mean?!” Baldur shouted, his deep voice steeped in rage.

“A-Ahhh, please calm down, Sir Bal. I’m sure Lady Lieselotte had a reason for — *Achoo!*” Fiene, terrified by his threatening attitude, tried to smooth things over, but her sneezing prevented her from speaking properly.

It was still spring, the sun was setting, *and* she was drenched in water. It was only natural for her to be cold. In fact, she was visibly shivering.

“I’m sorry, Miss Fiene. I should’ve prioritized protecting you,” Baldur said, lowering his head in sincere apology. He took off his robe and put it on Fiene.

Well, “put it on” was a bit of an understatement. Due to the difference in their physiques, it was more like she was being...covered? Wrapped up like a cocoon? At any rate, she probably couldn’t move her arms under its weight.

“Oh! Huh? What are you— Ahhh!”

Baldur picked up the wrapped girl, cradling her in his arms. Her shocked scream was much louder than the one we’d heard a few minutes ago.

“And he goes for the bridal carry without hesitation! That’s Baldur for you! His muscles aren’t just for show!”

“Oh, how exciting! Every maiden in the world dreams of being carried like that!”

Lord Endoh and Lady Kobayashee’s cheerful voices rang out. Apparently the gods had been watching. I let out a sigh of relief. Baldur would be taking care of Fiene, and the gods surely knew the truth behind this incident. I predicted the chaos would settle down soon.

However...

“Wait, stop! Why are you carrying me?! I appreciate you lending me your robe, but I can walk by myself!”

Fiene, who was *not* relieved and very much still in a state of chaos, squirmed in Baldur’s arms, trying to free herself from his grasp.

“But...” Baldur suddenly grabbed one of Fiene’s ankle boots, took it off, and turned it over with a splash. The reason it made a splash was because it had been full of water. “Are you going to walk in these shoes? I think it’d be pretty uncomfortable. Even if we pretend that isn’t a problem, wet clothes are heavy and stick to the skin. It’d be hard for you to walk in them. Letting me carry you would be faster. I’m also worried that you’d get too cold from walking in the wind,” he explained matter-of-factly as he dumped the water out of her other boot. He didn’t seem to be straining himself. It was probably easy for him to carry someone as light as Fiene.

I did wonder where his sense of shame went, though. *I suppose he sees it as rescue work? Perhaps he thinks if he lets her walk on her own, the robe that’s tightly wrapped around her will probably loosen, letting wind in through the gaps?*

“Um, maybe, I guess?” Fiene said. “I do think I might end up tracking water all over the place if I walk by myself, and it *is* warm like this. Well, it’s not just warm because of the robe, your body heat helps. But it’s pretty embarrassing, so I still want you to put me down. Then again, everyone else is acting like nothing’s happening... Am I being overly self-conscious?” Fiene was muttering, looking unconvinced. At this point, she had already curled up into a ball.

To be honest, I thought her reaction was normal. Since the gods had mentioned before they wanted the two of them to grow closer, I had simply been watching with a calm face that suggested nothing unusual was taking place. I didn’t know what my fiancée was thinking, but she wasn’t stopping Baldur either.

“I’d say Bal’s opinion makes more sense. Really, instead of standing around and asking questions, why don’t you hurry up and go inside?” Lieselotte suggested with a nonchalant air. Forget stopping him; she was *encouraging*

him.

Does the Riefenstahl family consider carrying people perfectly normal? Lady Kobayashee did say it was a maiden's dream. I wonder if that means I should do the same to Lieselotte... I think I'd have to train some more first, though. Yes, I'll work on that. Should the need ever arise, I want to be able to walk with ease while carrying her.

I didn't let my inner thoughts show on my face.

"Hmm...well, all right, then. Sorry, Sir Bal, but could you carry me inside?" Fiene finally relented, seemingly won over by the majority opinion of those present.

"Yes, of course." Baldur gave a satisfied nod. With that settled, he turned around to lower his head to me. "I'm sorry, Your Highness. Due to the urgent situation, I must take my leave with only a short bow." He then looked at my fiancée. "Liese, I'll ask you for the details later. Figure out what you're going to say when you apologize to Miss Fiene."

He turned and walked away with Fiene in his arms.

"Hmph, I'm not going to make excuses. I already explained it in full just now. I do believe the situation calls for atonement and compensation, not an apology," Lieselotte said.

Baldur looked back with an angry scowl. However, at that moment, Fiene sneezed thrice in a row, prompting him to prioritize the girl he was carrying. He held back his annoyance and continued to walk.

"Oh, wait, Sir Bal. Instead of going this way, could we stop by the classroom first?" Fiene asked.

"This is the faster route to the dorms. I'll pick up your things and bring them to you afterwards. You need to get changed first."

"Yes, but if I'm going to change into my sports uniform, I'll need to get it from the classroom."

"Huh? School is over for the day. Why would you change into the school's sports uniform instead of your regular clothes?"

I heard Fiene and Baldur have that puzzling exchange as they left the courtyard. Their conversation was soon overlaid by the Voices of the Gods, who were speaking much more rapidly than usual.

“All right, Sieg, before you say anything to Liese-tan, listen to what we have to say first,” Lady Kobayashee said. **“Liese-tan did splash water on Fiene, but right before that, Fiene lost control of a fire spell and the flame spread to her school uniform skirt. Liese-tan tried to put it out...”**

“But since she was panicking, she summoned a big, flashy surge of water,” Lord Endoh continued.

“She was only supposed to extinguish the flame, so she feels pretty ashamed of herself for drenching Fiene from head to toe in her haste. In *Lieselotte’s Memoir*, she wrote that she deserved to be blamed.”

“She wanted to be punished, which is why she played the villainess just now.”

I see. My fiancée is far too good-natured and awkward.

I nodded to Lord Endoh and Lady Kobayashee, who seemed to have been speaking quickly because they wanted to convey the situation as fast as possible. They sighed and continued, now in a relaxed manner.

“She could’ve just said she was putting out a fire, or at least that she didn’t mean to go that far,” Lady Kobayashee said.

“I respect that she doesn’t make excuses, but Sieg’s the one who’d feel bad if he accused her and found out the truth afterwards,” Lord Endoh said.

“This scene even made the players feel bad. At first, you get excited because of the romantic bridal carry, but then...”

“Yeah, Lieselotte takes the blame even though she was protecting Fiene from the flames. In the end, she’s just a stepping stone for Fiene and Bal’s love life. That’s so unfair! What do the game devs have against her?!”

They were mumbling in a way that suggested their words were not intended for me to hear. Still, they were right. The plot this so-called “game” would have followed if it weren’t for the Voices of the Gods was quite harsh. I was thankful

to have them.

“Now then, Lieselotte,” I said.

My fiancée, who was staring worriedly in the direction in which Fiene and Baldur had gone, flinched the moment I called her name. It made me feel even more sorry for her.

“I know you aren’t the kind of person who would harm others for no reason,” I said as gently as possible, making a conscious effort to smile.

My goal was to calm her down, but instead she shook her head with a stern expression and said, “That’s...not true.” She seemed determined to atone for her wrongdoing.

“I’d say it is. I didn’t bring it up earlier because it wasn’t the time to be arguing, but I noticed Miss Fiene’s clothes were partially burnt. You used that water spell to protect her, did you not?” It was deceitful of me to use the knowledge the gods had imparted on me as if I’d been aware of it from the start. However, I needed to be confident if I was going to convince her.

Lieselotte reluctantly caved and nodded her head. Perhaps it was partially because, unlike Baldur who she treated as an equal, I was the crown prince. Her cordiality made it difficult for her to argue with me.

“Yes...but I used an excessive amount of water. I hope to be punished accordingly.” She hung her head with a remorseful look on her face, as if she were a sinner awaiting judgment. Rather, she truly seemed to believe she was. What a dilemma.

“Well, it’s true that it wouldn’t feel right to leave things as they are,” Lady Kobayashee said. “Let’s have Liese-tan prepare an apology gift. By the way, casual clothing would make Fiene the happiest right now!”

Casual clothing? I mentally tilted my head in confusion.

“You heard her argue with Bal as they were leaving, right? Fiene actually doesn’t have many clothes besides her school uniform and sports uniform. Since it’s been raining so much these days, she didn’t get a chance to do the laundry before she ran out of clothes to wear. That’s why her sports uniform is the only thing she can change into right now.”

Oh, so that's what she was talking about. It has been raining for several days now...

I relayed Lady Kobayashee's advice. "If you feel sorry for getting Miss Fiene's clothes wet, why not give her some new ones? Considering she would take a detour to fetch her sports uniform, she may be in need of a change of clothes."

Lieselotte looked up with a start. "Your insight truly knows no bounds, Your Highness. Indeed, when Miss Fiene first entered the academy, I didn't have the impression that she owned an abundance of clothing. There are also the coming seasons to consider. At the very least, I assume she would be willing to accept such a gift. However, the harm I caused her was not merely to her clothes, and due to our standings, even a half-hearted apology on my part would force her to forgive me. When I think of it that way..."

I think Miss Fiene would forgive her even if she did nothing, considering her intent had been to extinguish the fire. However, she still seems conflicted. What to do?

While I was contemplating how to persuade my overly earnest fiancée, I heard Lady Kobayashee's strained voice from the heavens. **"By the way, if you don't do anything now, the love interest who helped her—in this case, Bal—will buy clothes for her. But frankly, Bal has no fashion sense. He'll give her clothes for children just 'cause she's so tiny."**

"Now *that* would be awkward! Well, can't say I expected him to be a fashion expert anyway. On the other hand, I'm sure Lieselotte would pick out the perfect outfit for her."

Hearing the gods' commentary, I decided to steer the conversation in that direction. "It's just a hunch, but considering we noticed Miss Fiene's plight simply by hearing their conversation earlier, I suspect Baldur has also already figured it out. In which case, he may present her with some new clothes as well."

"We cannot trust Bal with this!" Lieselotte exclaimed. "He's the kind of crude oaf who would categorize Miss Fiene and my younger sisters as 'little girls'! To make matters worse, there is simply no way that uncouth man would have developed an eye for women's clothing appropriate for the season, occasion,

and current trends. He'll brazenly procure an outfit that's a catastrophic failure in both size and style!"

Is she that against it? She and Baldur may have been close cousins, but she objected so vehemently I worried whether it was all right for her to speak so disparagingly of him. Then again, it was in line with what Lady Kobayashee had said, so perhaps she was merely stating the truth. It seemed excessive regardless. However, now she was undoubtedly going to be more open to providing Miss Fiene with new clothes.

"Er, in that case, I think you would be able to prepare a nice outfit for her," I said, regaining my composure.

Lieselotte nodded. "Yes, you're right. At the very least, it would be better than leaving the task to *him*. My family already has Miss Fiene's measurements, so I'll go to town and choose a few ready-to-wear items."

What? Why would House Riefenstahl have Fiene's measurements? I stared at her, but she seemed to be too engrossed in thought to notice.

"Liese-tan was the one who prepared Fiene's school uniform," Lady Kobayashee said, cheerful. **"Three sets for summer and three sets for winter, in fact. That's probably why she has the measurements. Just now, she was talking about when Fiene 'first entered the academy,' right? At the time, Fiene could only afford a sports uniform with her budget. Liese-tan couldn't bear to see that, so she gave Fiene her 'hand-me-downs,' which were actually made-to-order."**

"She's basically her guardian at this point," Lord Endoh said. **"The three necessities of life are food, clothing, and shelter, right? If she's giving her casual clothes too, that's a third of Fiene's life she's providing for."**

Their words gave me a grasp of the situation. However, as Lord Endoh said, Lieselotte's actions were exceeding the realm of what one would do for a mere classmate. I knew she was caring, but as her fiancé, I didn't like seeing her be so devoted to someone else. I even wished she would spend less time thinking about Fiene.

"I'll come with you," I said without thinking.

“...Huh?” Lieselotte tilted her head.

“You’re going to town to find clothes for Miss Fiene, aren’t you? I’ll come with you. Well, I can’t say I’m any more knowledgeable than Baldur when it comes to women’s clothing, but I can at least carry our purchases and provide the funds.”

“Wh-What are you suggesting, Your Highness?! Th-This is my transgression to atone for, and above all, I couldn’t possibly trouble you!”

“If that’s what concerns you, we can split the costs evenly between us.”

“No, we cannot! After all, that would be akin to...Miss Fiene receiving clothing from you, a man... What if there’s a misunderstanding?!”

“Oh, I’m sorry. You’re right; I didn’t think of that. How careless of me. I was too caught up in my desire to help you.”

“...Huh? M-Me? Not Miss Fiene?”

“Of course. Earlier, I wasn’t able to stand up for you on the spot. By helping you make amends with Miss Fiene, I was actually hoping to make amends with you. However, you’re correct that it wouldn’t be honorable for a man in my position to give a gift to a woman other than my fiancée. I really am sorry,” I said, beginning to lower my head in what was going to be a deep bow.

“Ahhh, please raise your head, Your Highness! I also spoke out of line!” Lieselotte was trembling as she frantically stopped me.

I peeked at her expression and determined that she was no longer angry. I sighed in relief. “At any rate, I would like to accompany you. I don’t want to make you handle everything by yourself, and above all, I would never pass up a chance to go on a date in town with my lovely fiancée.” I smoothly took her hand in mine.

“Wh— D-Did you just— Whaaat?!”

I didn’t know if her panicking was due to the word “date” or the fact that I was holding her hand, but either way, she seemed too flustered to form coherent sentences. I smiled and tugged her along with me as I walked. “I’m sure we’ll only be able to walk around casually in town together while we’re still students. Now, off we go!”

“V-Very well. I understand, so please, I-let go of my hand!”

I hope Lieselotte’s heart is fully occupied by me, not Fiene. I had no intention of letting go of her hand.

After sending someone to inform Baldur and Fiene—who were probably in the dorms—of the situation and Lieselotte’s wish to give Fiene new clothes, we headed out to town.

Though I said we’d be walking around “casually,” due to our positions, we were escorted by guards—and the clothing store we were going to frequently did business with the royal family.

Still, both Lieselotte and I rarely had the chance to go to a normal store, so the walk there felt like a new experience. Along the way, we argued several times about holding hands.

“It is disrespectful of me to have you hold my hand,” Lieselotte insisted for the nth time. “This isn’t appropriate for a transgressor who needs to atone for their offense!”

“For Liese-tan, holding hands with Sieg is like an amazing reward she can’t help but be delighted about,” Lady Kobayashee explained. **“She seems to be having a hard time accepting that joy when she still feels guilty about Fiene.”**

A reward felt more than fitting to me. I smiled at my fiancée. “You’re not a transgressor, Lieselotte. What you did today was worthy of praise.”

“N-No, that’s not true...”

“It is. Being covered in water is nothing compared to being engulfed in flames. You absolutely did a good deed. I know you regret overdoing it, but the clothes we’re about to buy will make up for it. Next time, you can use what you learned from this experience to do a better job.”

“If Your Highness insists, then I suppose it may be true... H-However, that does not mean I deserve such an honor!”

“Holding hands with your fiancé isn’t anything out of the ordinary, is it? It’s normal to touch one another when dancing or attending events as a couple.”

“H-However, we are both wearing gloves on those occasions. If I were to dirty Your Highness’s hand with my sweat, I would have to slit my own throat!”

“No, please don’t. I sweat too, so you wouldn’t be dirtying me.” I couldn’t help but sigh at her persistence. “You were fine with holding hands the day we first met,” I murmured.

“Everything was different back then.” She turned away with a pout, and I was struck by the beauty of her side profile. The childish gesture only made her perfect ladylike comeliness stand out more.

I was captivated, and at the same time, I began to worry. *She may be my fiancée, but is it rude of me to casually hold such a beautiful woman’s hand?* Simply being with her like this made me feel like I was walking on a cloud. I was enjoying our little outing very much, but was she resisting because she didn’t feel the same? When we were children, she openly admired me, but now, she was distancing herself quite a bit.

“It’s fine!” Lady Kobayashee shouted. **“You don’t have to worry about that stuff when you’re on a date! Go ahead and hold hands!”**

“Sieg, you don’t have to look so worried,” Lord Endoh said. **“Everything Lieselotte’s been saying just means, ‘I can’t handle how happy this makes me. My heart is beating so fast; I can’t take it anymore.’ She doesn’t hate you—it’s the opposite. So go for it! Kobayashi’s ecstatic too, so please stay that way for her sake.”**

They had a point. In her panic, Lieselotte had let slip that she considered holding hands “an honor,” which could be interpreted as her being happy to do it. Lady Kobayashee’s excitement and Lord Endoh’s calm advice convinced me: if my fiancée truly didn’t like it, she would say so clearly. She was also rather calm when it came to others. Or to phrase it differently...

“Hey, Lieselotte, are you perhaps saying that, unlike when we were children, holding my hand makes your heart beat a little faster now?” I asked.

She blushed. “Of course not!”

“Which means it’s not just ‘a little.’” Lord Endoh did not miss a beat. **“If she wasn’t nervous at all, she wouldn’t be resisting this much and her hand**

wouldn't be sweating."

"Ha ha ha! I see!" My unintentional laughter was met with a reproachful glare from Lieselotte. However, her cheeks were flushed, and thinking about it, I realized she had never physically tried to shake off my hand. Her complaints had been purely verbal. It seemed that she really was happy to walk hand in hand with me. "I'm sorry for laughing, Lieselotte. You're just too cute. Now, we're almost at the store. Why don't we find some clothes for you as well while we're at it?"

My fiancée, who seemed to be in a bad mood from my teasing, shook her head in response to my cheerful suggestion. "No, Your Highness. We came here today to find clothes for Miss Fiene. We cannot waste time and keep her waiting when she is likely wearing her sports uniform as a stopgap," she said bluntly.

I was a little disappointed, but she was entirely correct. Fiene was the priority at the moment. I decided to give up for now and make plans for a future occasion instead.

"Yes, you're right," I said. "We can shop for your clothes another day, when we have time to do it leisurely. I'd like to look at other stores too. As long as I'm with you, even walking around town would be enjoyable... Assuming we can hold hands like this again, that is."

"Th-That's... My heart can't take this..." my fiancée said weakly.

"Sieg, I think you pushed way past Lieselotte's heartbeat limit with that up-close princely smile of yours..." Lord Endoh said, exasperated.

"It's okay! People don't die from excitement! Keep going!" Lady Kobayashee insisted.

I laughed heartily again at their three different reactions.

"That was smooth, Sieg," Lady Kobayashi said. "It was also great how you guys gave Fiene the clothes in person. Liese-tan couldn't have done it without you by her side!"

Her words of praise had me feeling a bit embarrassed. I scratched my cheek. “I suppose. When we met with Miss Fiene, she wasn’t upset in the slightest. Rather, she was humbled yet overjoyed to receive new clothes. In the end, Lieselotte was the only one who still believed she was in the wrong.”

“No, Baldur was quite exasperated with me,” Lieselotte said from across the table.

I wasn’t going to let her put herself down. “Yes, he had enough of your clumsiness and your tendency to push yourself too hard. It wasn’t because you failed to control your water spell. Besides, in the first place, that was the fault of the Witch of Yore. You did nothing wrong at all.” I smiled at her.

Lieselotte averted her gaze, sulking. It seemed she finally ran out of arguments.

“And then there was the makeup incognito town date later on... Oh, Liese-tan seems to be at her limit, so I guess we shouldn’t talk about it!” Lady Kobayashi said.

“Yeah, that’d be way too inconsiderate,” Lord Endo said. “Oh, but don’t worry, you two. I guess since we were watching you through *Magikoi*, we couldn’t see anything that was too far off from the scenes in the game. We didn’t see that next date at all.”

Now that he mentioned it, I hadn’t heard the Voices of the Gods during that date even though Lieselotte was present. In other words, the memory belonged solely to us.

I’ll treasure it.

“Hey, Aoto, how do you think it determined which scenes we could see?” Lady Kobayashi tilted her head. “Like, we could only see events that clearly felt important, right? And personally, I found it really weird we could even see them outside the existing maps in the game. It can’t just be based on *Magikoi*, right?”

Lord Endo tilted his head as well and frowned. “Well, I do have a theory. Remember, we couldn’t see much of what Baldur was doing when Fiene—*Magikoi’s* heroine—wasn’t involved. But we could see Lieselotte. I think the difference between the two...would be *Lieselotte’s Memoir*.”

“Oh, I get it! The fan disc counts as part of the game! Is that why we were able to meddle with those scenes too?”

“Yeah. I feel like we were able to get involved in the scenes mentioned in *Lieselotte’s Memoir* even if they weren’t covered in the main game where Fiene was the lead, like the ones that only had Sieg and Lieselotte. Same goes for anything relating to the Witch of Yore. She didn’t appear in the main game until the final battle, but she came up a lot in the fan disc.”

“True. You’re a genius, Aoto! I bet that’s spot-on. It also means we won’t be able to connect to this world as easily as we used to, which makes sense, but it’s kind of depressing.” Lady Kobayashi hung her head.

Lord Endo frantically tried to reassure her. “W-Well, it’s just a theory! There were exceptions to that rule, weren’t there? Maybe the game was just a starting point. Like, it was made up of scenes that were easy to connect to?”

“Yeah, that must be it. We’re gods, after all! We did a lot of miraculous things like giving our divine blessings. Linking different worlds together is a piece of cake, right?” Lady Kobayashi’s worried expression made it clear she was only pretending to be upbeat.

“Definitely. Heck, I feel like if we keep saying it, it’ll actually happen.”

Overcome with sympathy, I placed a hand on Lord Endo’s shoulder. “Yes, we also trust that today won’t be our last meeting,” I said firmly. “We’ll continue to pray to you from here. It’s said that the faith of the people contributed to the Goddess Lireнна’s revival. In other words, people’s prayers become a god’s power. When enough is gathered, the path will open.”

“When Lady Lireнна went to your realm, she gave you her divine favor as a foothold, did she not?” Lieselotte added. “I, too, have received Lady Shihono’s divine favor. Our connection should help pave the way.”

Lieselotte and I exchanged looks and we smiled. *Yes, I’m sure we’ll be fine.*

“Oh yeah!” Lord Endo said. “Lireнна said that’s why Kuon made *Magikoi* in the first place—as players think about the scenes in the game, their prayers create a path! So if we all keep praying for each other, we can do it again!”

Lady Kobayashi nodded happily. “Yep. If that’s all it takes, we’ll be fine! I’m

looking forward to seeing you guys again! Well then, now that we don't have to worry about that anymore, what should we talk about next?" She had her usual energy back.

◆◆◆ The Events Leading Up to the Late Autumn Ball

Semester 1, May: Lieselotte's At-Home Postmortem

"No matter how you look at it, that was far too rude, Lieselotte Riefenstahl!"

One spring evening, a girl's cry rang out in the Riefenstahl manor, which was located in a corner of the royal capital. The servants immediately thought to themselves, *Ah, our lady ran into difficulties with Prince Siegwald again.*

The girl they served, Lieselotte, was kindhearted, but extremely clumsy when it came to expressing her feelings. To make matters worse, she was especially harsh towards her fiancé and one-sided crush, Siegwald, to prevent him from realizing she loved him. Upon returning home, she would hold her head in her hands and scream. That was her typical routine.

At such times, a certain middle-aged maid would enter Lieselotte's room, and everyone would look expectantly at the maid, knowing she was the only one who could handle the girl's plight.

Lieselotte was slumped over her bed, crying. The maid, who had been her nursing mother, gently ran a comb through the girl's hair as was usual. Lieselotte's breathing eventually calmed as the soothing motions continued.

"I wish I could be more honest," Lieselotte murmured, still facedown. "Yet whenever I'm in his presence, I can't help but be nervous. I'm overcome with feelings of adoration and I simply don't know what to do..."

The maid listened patiently to her whimpers.

"Today, he was so kind as to call me cute, but I told him, 'Please don't joke around' and ran away..." Lieselotte's voice gradually became mixed with sobs. She trembled weakly as she spoke. "Later, I passed by him in the hallway. He greeted me, but his smile was so dazzling that it reminded me of our previous

conversation. I didn't know what to do, so I ran off without so much as a 'hello'!" She began to wail again.

"In that case, you can greet him properly tomorrow," the maid said softly. "Don't worry. His Highness is a generous soul."

Lieselotte shook her head. "That had to have been the last straw! I'm sure of it. He hates me now!"

"Then you'll just have to make him fall for you again. With your beauty, intelligence, and grace, you can capture the heart of any man if you really try."

Lieselotte forced a smile behind her tears. "Some have overly doting parents, but I have an overly doting nanny."

The maid patted her twice on the back and stood up. "That's not true. Now wipe your tears and stand tall, dear. When you do that, you're the most beautiful princess in the world."

"Well...I suppose I certainly wouldn't suit him if I were crying all the time." Lieselotte finally raised her head. Her eyes were puffy and red, but her tears had mostly stopped. "Thank you." Her face was messy, but her smile was genuine.



The maid grinned broadly and clapped. “Now that’s a lovely smile. You should show it to Prince Siegwald! He’ll be charmed in an instant.”

“I’m not sure about that...but smiling is a fundamental part of interpersonal relationships. I do wish I could smile all the time like His Highness.”

“Well, let’s start by trying our best to smile like him during greetings, all right?”

“A-All right. Although I don’t think I’ll ever be able to smile as radiantly as him...”

“Oh, is that so? Come to think of it, you did say earlier that he has a dazzling smile.”

“Yes... Yes, exactly! His Highness’s smile is wonderful—the most handsome sight in the world—and today was no exception. No matter how rude I am to him, he always smiles with such grace and composure. It makes me realize my own immaturity, and at the same time, I fall in love with him all over again.” Lieselotte sighed dreamily. “He is a real gentleman, kind and never arrogant. I truly feel blessed to be his fiancée.”

Prompting Lieselotte to sing Prince Siegwald’s praises was a necessary step in getting her back on her feet, but once she got started, there was no end in sight. Among the many servants who cherished her, this maid was the only one who could continue to listen to her gushing with a smile. That was why the others had looked to her earlier.

Lieselotte was the only person oblivious as to why her at-home review sessions only ever had one other attendee.

July, Before Summer Break: My Fiancée Is an Adorable Tsun de Rais

One day during summer break, Kobayashi Shihono and Endo Aoto were sitting in Kobayashi’s living room as usual. However, their current conversation was tense, lacking the typical laughter and cheer.

“Now then, it’s almost summer vacation in the otome game’s world

too...which means we have to watch out for the event that's coming up," Shihono said, glum.

Aoto nodded. "Yeah, the newbie check. At the rate we're going, Bal will probably be Fiene's partner for that fight, right? Which means..."

"Yep, we're gonna need him to fight pretty well, or else he and Fiene could die. It'd be the same with any other love interest."

They fell silent for some time. The people they were talking about were characters in the otome game *Love Me Magically!*, also known as *Magikoi*. Rather, they were *supposed* to just be characters, but ever since Aoto's play-by-play and Shihono's color commentary had begun to reach them, they instead felt like friends living in another world. The possibility of their deaths weighed heavily on the two high schoolers.

Shihono shook her head. "We can't be acting like this. Sieg thinks we're gods, so if we're worried, he'll worry too!"

Aoto nodded and smiled. "Right. So I was thinking about the fight, and it'd be a walk in the park if we had multiple healers, wouldn't it? In the game, Fiene only goes with one of the guys, but why don't we just break the party-of-two rule?"

"Oooh, that's a good idea! *Lieselotte's Memoir* showed that Liese-tan wanted to hang out with everyone. We should send her and all of the available love interests!"

"Oh, that sounds fun."

Having found a starting point to a solution, the two friends nodded at each other with earnest smiles, returning to their usual cheerful mood.

"All right, we'll go with that, then," Shihono said. "Back to being energetic gods, Play-by-Play Caster Endo!"

"Yeah, let's have fun and do our best, Color Commentator Kobayashi."

After playfully calling each other by their roles in the game's world, they began speaking to Siegwald, the prince who could hear their voices and revered them as "gods from a foreign realm."

Summer break at the Royal Academy of Magic was to begin next week. Accordingly, we students were going to perform a major cleanup of the mountains behind the school today. Now, this was no ordinary cleaning activity. The entire student body was going to join forces to hunt down the countless monsters lurking there.

All of the students at our academy were capable of using magic, but the majority of the people living in the country could not. Thus, it naturally fell on us to use our power to protect the civilians. Plus, practical experience was an important part of our education. That was why this school was built in front of mountains that were prone to amassing mana and spawning monsters.

However, long breaks meant that all of the students would be absent. There would be no one left to handle the monsters, so we needed to do a thorough extermination before leaving. This hunt had become a school tradition known as the Big Cleanup.

Right before said cleanup, the students and faculty gathered in the square between the school building and the mountain. It was early in the morning, and everyone was wearing sports uniforms instead of their usual attire. The first-years seemed nervous for their first Big Cleanup, while the upperclassmen and teachers watched them with warm smiles and reassured them. Everyone was checking their equipment and supplies and doing light warmup exercises.

Despite being the crown prince and a third-year, I was just as—or perhaps more—nervous than the first-years, although I couldn't let it show due to my position. The mountain was regularly culled, so there wasn't *supposed* to be a risk of encountering anything particularly strong, but from what I heard, a grizzly bear had appeared just the other day. It had quickly been defeated by Baldur Riefenstahl, a knight-in-training, but the fact remained that such powerful monsters weren't supposed to be on this mountain.

I hope it was just a one-off anomaly...

My thoughts were cut off by Lieselotte's cold, stern voice. "Miss Fiene, I do say you're being conceited," she said.

Lieselotte was my fiancée and the daughter of a marquis. She often fretted

over Fiene, the sole commoner at our school. Sometimes, she would even give her guidance despite them both being first-years. Was that the case right now as well?

“I-I’m sorry,” Fiene said, lowering her head. Her face was pale and she was trembling slightly.

Just as I was about to rush over to do something about the uncomfortable atmosphere, Baldur—who had been standing closer to them—stepped in between them as if to defend Fiene. “Hey, Liese, are you bullying Miss Fiene again?”

“Bal!” Lieselotte glared hatefully at him.

“Oh, no, she wasn’t... Um...” Fiene looked fearfully at the two Riefenstahl cousins who had begun scowling at each other.

“I take offense to that accusation,” Lieselotte said. “I was merely stating the truth. Miss Fiene was trying to venture into the mountain alone. Regardless of her skills, how can that be described as anything other than conceited?”

Baldur heaved a sigh. “Even so, you could’ve phrased it better. You can’t just publicly shame her like that.”

“Oh, um, no, I agree with Lady Lieselotte,” Fiene said. “I do think it might be reckless to go on my own. It’s just that I couldn’t think of anyone to go with, you know? I’m isolated from the rest of the students and all.”

Baldur hummed and gave a single nod before shifting his focus from Lieselotte to Fiene. “I see. In that case, I’ll go with you.”

“Um, that would be kind of awkward...”

Fiene averted her gaze and mumbled something in response to Baldur’s offer, but it was too quiet for me to hear.

“What difference does adding Bal make?” Lieselotte asked. “It was you two who encountered an unusual monster in these mountains the other day, so you should know it’s foolish to venture there by yourselves when you don’t know what else could be out there.”

“Miss Fiene and I had no issue dealing with the grizzly bear the other day,”

Baldur said. “No enemy is a match for us.”

“Now *that’s* a bold statement! This is exactly what I call carelessness, arrogance, and conceit!”

The Riefenstahls’ argument was rapidly intensifying. Poor Fiene, who had been left behind, looked like she was about to cry as their voices and glares became harsher and harsher.

Personally, I also thought the problem would be resolved if Baldur went with Fiene. Why was Lieselotte making such a fuss about it?

“Liese, what’s gotten into you?” Baldur asked, exasperated. “You’ve been awfully snappy about this, and you’re even making accusations. Are you jealous of Miss Fiene, who Prince Siegwald recognizes as a friend?”

His words made Lieselotte’s anger go up a notch. At least, it felt that way as she looked up at Baldur, fury in her eyes. However, she then did an about-face, speaking quietly and indifferently. “You seem determined to make it sound like I’m bullying Miss Fiene, when I’m simply concerned about your lack of ability and self-conceit. Oh, I have an idea. Shall we compete to see who can defeat more monsters in the cleanup? Me versus the two of you. I’ll prove how inferior you are.”

All right, no. Even Lieselotte would be at a disadvantage in a two-on-one competition. Also, she can’t be thinking rationally if she’s considering venturing into the mountains alone when a grizzly bear appeared just the other day. I thought the problem would be solved if Baldur accompanied Fiene, but it’s become such a mess that I can no longer stand back and watch. Baldur and Lieselotte are normally as close as siblings. Why is this happening?

I made up my mind to intervene, but just as I stepped forward, the Voices of the Gods rang out from the heavens.

“Sieg, stop them right now,” Lady Kobayashee said. **“If they go into the mountains and run into the boss monster, Bal and Fiene might get KO’d, and then it’s game over. It’s dangerous for Liese-tan too. You should group up with as many people as you can.”**

What?! The color drained from my face. *I didn’t understand some of those*

words, but did she say there's a monster that can defeat Bal and Fiene?!

"Everyone, wait!" I shouted on reflex.

"P-Prince Siegwald..." Lieselotte lowered her head, her face pale for some reason.

Baldur gave a silent bow.

"Huh? Ah, Your Highness?!" Fiene said, reacting a bit later than the other two.

"I'm sorry for interrupting you," I said. "Raise your heads. I received a divine prophecy just now. There is an extremely powerful monster in these mountains, and we should group up with as many people as possible." In my haste, I only relayed the essential points.

"What?!" the three shouted.

Fiene was clearly flustered. Behind her, Lieselotte and Baldur made eye contact, nodded to each other, and looked at me with tense expressions. Their communication was so smooth; it was as if their quarrel had never happened. It made me feel rather conflicted.

"When you go to the mountains, a basilisk is going to appear," Lady Kobayashee said. **"I'll tell you the location later just in case, but even if you don't go there, it'll probably come after Fiene anyway. The basilisk can inflict paralysis and petrification, which will prevent you from moving, so it'll be safer if you have multiple people who can use healing magic. It'd be best if you could all go together and bring Art with you."**

"Bal specializes in close-range attacks, so if he and Fiene go on their own, it'll be over the moment Fiene gets stuck," Lord Endoh added.

I see. Baldur and Fiene would indeed struggle against a basilisk. It'll be better if Lieselotte and I go with them, since we're all-rounders who can use healing magic. It'll be even more reassuring if Art's with us.

I acknowledged Lord Endoh and Lady Kobayashee with a subtle nod and declared, "The gods have foretold that Miss Fiene will encounter a basilisk today! Everyone here, along with the priest Artur Richter, are to combat it together."

“What? A basilisk?!” Baldur’s face turned pale.

“To think such a fearsome monster would appear in these mountains...”
Lieselotte murmured.

The remaining person—that is, Fiene—seemed lost. “Basilisks are...those snakes that don’t have any edible parts despite being so huge, right?” She tilted her head.

Her complete lack of urgency threw me off guard. *How do I explain this...?*

“I-It’s not a matter of edible or inedible!” Lieselotte shouted. “A basilisk’s body contains many types of poison, you know? It’s also said that it can petrify people with its gaze. If you don’t have anyone to heal you when it paralyzes or petrifies you, *you’ll* be the one swallowed whole!”

“Eek! Oh, so the poison is why it’s inedible—and dangerous!” Fiene shuddered, finally grasping the gravity of the situation.

Lieselotte huffed. “Yes. You and Bal are not going to be able to handle it alone. It’d be fine if you stayed back and focused on healing, but if you went in front and got paralyzed, Bal wouldn’t be able to heal you.”

“Yeah... I don’t think I’d be able to stay put in the back,” Fiene said.

“I don’t recall you being good with a wand in the first place, despite being a healer.”

“I’ve been practicing, but when I’m more than a meter away, I get restless...”

“How absurd.” Lieselotte shook her head. “You ought to either take lessons from someone skilled with the wand or closely observe such a person and mimic them.”

“I understand...”

“Bal is useless on that front as well, because the Riefenstahl sword has unique properties. Besides, even without knowing about the basilisk, you should’ve been wary of the mountains since a grizzly bear appeared just the other day!”

“Yes...”

As Lieselotte’s criticism grew more and more heated, Fiene’s head lowered

further and further in dejection.

Baldur cut in, a stern expression on his face. “Hey, Liese, that’s enough. You’re not wrong, but why do you have to be so hard on Miss Fiene?”

“I’m merely saying what needs to be said,” Lieselotte said. “I don’t think I’d be doing Miss Fiene any favors if I spoiled her irresponsibly like you do.”

Sparks flew as their eyes met.

Why are they clashing? Baldur said Lieselotte was jealous of Fiene, who I recognized as a friend, but I don’t see how that would cause discord between cousins who were raised like brother and sister...

“Bal said she was jealous of Fiene, but she’s actually jealous of the kuudere Bal,” Lady Kobayashee said.

“Basically, at first she was thinking, ‘I’m really worried about Miss Fiene. I want to go with her,’ and now, it’s become, ‘I’m good at using a wand, so she should rely on me instead of Bal,’” Lord Endoh said.

“That’s what *Lieselotte’s Memoir* implied, yeah. She wrote something like, ‘I couldn’t help but envy everyone who got to do the extracurricular activities with their friends.’ Since she can’t be honest and say that, she’s jealous of Bal who’s super straightforward with his love, so her tsun side comes out in full force.”

I was proud of myself for not losing my cool upon hearing their words.

I see. So that’s how it is. My fiancée is truly too adorably clumsy.

“All right, calm down, both of you,” I said. “You’re scaring Miss Fiene.”

“Oh! I’m sorry, Your Highness,” Baldur said.

“Please forgive us for that shameful display,” Lieselotte said.

They hurriedly lowered their heads, putting their intense argument on hold. Fiene breathed a sigh of relief.

I continued, “The two of you sound like parents clashing over their child’s upbringing. You both share the same concern for Miss Fiene, so don’t get too heated, all right?” I couldn’t help but chuckle.

Lieselotte blushed, while Baldur froze as if he'd had a sudden realization. He glanced at his cousin and let out an exasperated sigh as he finally understood the meaning behind her words.

"Wh-What is it, Bal? I'm not worried about Miss Fiene!"

"No, it's fine. I get it. I forgot that whenever you're intentionally harsh, it's because you're embarrassed."

Lieselotte was trying her best to keep snapping at him, but Baldur had fully grasped the situation after hearing my words.

I chuckled. "Well then, let's invite Art and go together. The basilisk is a formidable foe, but there's nothing to fear if we have multiple healers. Part of the purpose of the Big Cleanup is for the students to learn to work together and deepen their friendships, so let's get along and have fun, all right?"

Earlier, Lady Kobayashee had revealed that Lieselotte was envious of the people who got to do the extracurricular activities with their friends. It reminded me of the Big Cleanup's other purpose and, as expected, Lieselotte's expression immediately brightened when I mentioned it.

"I-If Your Highness insists, then I suppose I—"

"I know Liese is a pain to deal with, but she *is* skilled with a wand. When we're fighting in the mountains, Miss Fiene should stay by her side."

Lieselotte glared at Baldur for interrupting her, but she didn't reject his suggestion. She seemed to be sulking in a completely different way from earlier, without any hostility.

"She's prickly on the outside, but there's no hiding that happy look on her face!" Lord Endoh shouted.

"Fiene's also relaxed now that she knows what was really going on, so it should be smooth sailing from here on out," Lady Kobayashee said.

I agreed with their opinions. Lieselotte was extremely capable, and she was strict with herself as well as others. Her aura of isolation, when combined with her attempts to cover up her embarrassment, resulted in so many misunderstandings that it made one feel sorry for her.

Even Baldur, who knew her well, had thought she was bullying her classmate out of jealousy. It would normally be difficult for her to get along with a friend—namely, Miss Fiene—but that was exactly why she yearned for it, and why she was now happy it was becoming a possibility.

A heartwarming feeling washed over me as I looked at my fiancée. The others likely felt the same.

A beat passed this way.

“Ugh...! Miss Fiene, I challenge you!” Lieselotte shouted, as if unable to bear the awkwardness any longer.

“Huh? A-A challenge?!” Fiene stammered.

“What are you doing now, Liese?” Baldur gave his cousin a suspicious look.

Lieselotte glared at the two. “Miss Fiene, I will fight the basilisk with you, but let us compete on the number of other kills. If you win, I will invite you to my home for afternoon tea, and if you lose, you will have to have a practical lesson on tea party etiquette at my house!”

Wait...what? Aren't those the same outcome? She phrased them differently out of embarrassment, but they're both invitations to a tea party. Right?

“Tea at Lady Lieselotte’s house?! W-Will there be sweets?!” Fiene’s eyes sparkled. I wasn’t sure whether she realized how excited she sounded.

“But of course,” Lieselotte said. “I’d appreciate it if you didn’t underestimate House Riefenstahl.”

“Hey, Liese, you should prepare some things that’ll keep for a while, so she can bring them home if she likes them,” Baldur said.

“You don’t need to tell *me* that. Naturally, I will have a wide selection of desserts prepared.”

Their conversation lit a flame in Fiene’s eyes. “Sweets, confections, precious treats, luxury desserts! Delicious sweets from a noble’s house, and *I can bring them home!*” After muttering that, Fiene straightened her back and with a serious expression declared, “We can’t just stand here. Let’s find Sir Richter and defeat that basilisk! Then I can compete with Lady Lieselotte in exterminating

the remaining pests!” She dashed off at lightning speed.

“Oh, wait, Miss Fiene!” Baldur shouted, running after her. “I’ll go with you!”

They...sure are fast. In Fiene’s case, she appears to have cast enhancements on herself.

As I was staring blankly at their quickly retreating figures, I heard an exasperated sigh coming from beside me.

“Good grief, that girl...” Lady Lieselotte muttered. Despite her words, she had a gentle smile on her face. Then, she tightened her expression and sharply lowered her head to me. “Thank you for your assistance, Your Highness. Also, please allow me to apologize for my own lack of ability in—”

“W-Wait, Lieselotte,” I said. “Raise your head, all right? You’ve made your gratitude clear, and there’s no need to apologize.”

Lieselotte swallowed the rest of her apology and slowly looked up. “I mustn’t trouble you, though...”

“Hmm, it’s true that Sieg’s entrance changed the mood,” Lady Kobayashee said. **“It seems like a case of ‘The North Wind and the Sun,’ but it’s actually more like the carrot and stick—or the stick and carrot, I guess? Well, anyway, the point is, Liese-tan thinks she’s incompetent and that Sieg’s better than her. In reality, combining Liese-tan’s lecture with Sieg’s gentle suggestion was super effective.”**

“What? But I respect Lieselotte for being able to say what needs to be said, even if it paints her as the villain,” I said aloud, without thinking.

“Huh?” My fiancée stiffened, seemingly caught off guard. Apparently, she thought I was better than her.

“Lieselotte, I merely gave them a reason to reevaluate the situation. I think it was your sincere effort in persuading them that made them understand. My advice came from the gods’ prophecy, and—” *I’m the one who should be ashamed for always relying on you and the gods*, I was going to say, but the sight of Lieselotte crying rendered me speechless.

“Oh, I-I’m sorry, Your Highness,” she stammered as the tears streamed down

her face. “Oh no, how disgraceful of me.” She hurriedly tried to wipe them away.

“Lieselotte, if you rub your eyes so hard, they’ll turn red.” I took my handkerchief from my pocket and gently dabbed her eyes with it.

“Th-Thank you...”

Wh-What should I do? Why did she suddenly start crying? Did I do something wrong? What do I do now that she’s covered her face with the handkerchief? I was so lost that I couldn’t move.

“It looks like she’s crying out of happiness, so why don’t you pat her head?” Lord Endoh said.

I immediately sprung to action. Lieselotte was looking down, and I began to stroke her hair. *Is this right?*

I heard muffled whimpers behind the handkerchief. *Thinking about it, considering how concerned with public appearances she is, she’ll likely push me away.*

However, contrary to my expectations, she allowed me to pat her head. She trembled and hid her face further behind the handkerchief, and I could faintly hear her stifled sobs. *Um, is this good or bad?*

“Liese-tan’s often misunderstood, so she’s weak to people being kind and understanding to her,” Lady Kobayashee said.

“Oh yeah, she was a big softie in the Reverse Harem Route,” Lord Endoh said. **“It makes sense, considering how isolated she was in her memoir, but it was still surprising how quickly she fell for Fiene.”**

“Ha ha ha, it’s because she’s hard to understand, and she seems way too perfect. People tend to avoid her, which makes her lonely. It’s unfortunate, because she’s actually a good girl—and really cute.”

The gods’ conversation connected all of the dots for me. *That’s right; Lieselotte is easily misunderstood. Outsiders sometimes see her warnings and advice to Fiene as bullying, just like Baldur did. Thus, when I intervened in their quarrel, she must have thought I was going to blame her based on the same*

false assumption. That was why her face turned pale. Now that the misunderstanding has been cleared up, her relief has led to tears of joy. How charming.

Once you got to know Lieselotte, it became clear how adorable she was. I understood why Lady Kobayashee called her a good girl. I felt like I was praising a young child as I patted Lieselotte on the head.

Well, the issue is that one has to get to know her first... Before hearing the Voices of the Gods, I had been rather disheartened by her strictness towards both others and herself. I hadn't understood her at all. *Since I can hear the Voices of the Gods now, does that make it my mission to tell the world how sweet she is?*

"How can I get everyone to understand how cute Lieselotte is?" I unwittingly murmured aloud.

"Huh?!" My fiancée looked up. "Wh-What are you talking about, Your Highness?!"

Good. Her tears have stopped.

I finally got a look at her eyes. They were slightly red, but it wasn't noticeable because her cheeks and ears were flushed a much deeper shade.

"Just dote on Liese-tan the way you are now, Sieg!" Lady Kobayashee said. **"She's weak to you, so she turns into an adorable mess right away! Once someone's seen this cuteness, they'll never think she's scary again!"**

"Yeah," Lord Endoh said. **"For every person who comes to understand her, she'll be misunderstood less and less. It only takes a small opportunity for people to see her good side. That's how it was for Bal and Fiene just now, wasn't it?"**

The Voices of the Gods covered up Lieselotte's desperate assertions, which were along the lines of, "I am not cute in the slightest. As the future crown princess, I cannot allow others to make light of me."

Come to think of it, the gods said something similar before.

I observed the faces of the other students in the area. They were focusing on

their own preparations since it would be rude to stare at us, but the atmosphere seemed relaxed—warm, even. It was possible that many of them had gotten a sense of Lieselotte’s charm from what they had overheard of our conversation. At the very least, unlike when she had first started scolding Fiene, no one was shrinking back in fear anymore.

“Your Highness, are you listening?!” Lieselotte glared at me. She may have intended to sound as stern and dignified as when she was scolding Fiene and Baldur, but her expression and the color of her face made it clear she was embarrassed, so I could only see her as adorable.

“Ahhh, Liese-tan’s the queen of cuteness!” Lady Kobayashee exclaimed.

“Since she’s normally so harsh, it makes the impact even stronger when you find out she’s actually sweet on the inside,” Lord Endoh said.

I completely agreed. *Today has proven once again that my fiancée is an adorable tsun de rais.*

For a second, I considered keeping her non-obvious charm for myself. However, I couldn’t let her continue to be misunderstood and avoided by her peers. With renewed determination, I vowed to bring out more of her cute side.

July, Before Summer Break: A Scene from a Hot Day

Lieselotte, who would be returning to her marquise the next day for summer break, had come to the castle to see me. However, my meeting with the visitor preceding her had drawn on longer than expected, so I had kept her waiting.

I hurried along the path. I was told Lieselotte was passing the time by taking a stroll through the gardens in the royal family’s quarters.

“It’s awfully hot today,” she muttered with a light sigh.

Oh, she’s over there.

I looked in the direction of her voice, and my heart skipped a beat. Lieselotte was lifting her lush blonde hair up in a ponytail, perhaps because it had been sticking to her skin from sweat. Her pale neck, usually hidden by her neatly

arranged hair, was now fully exposed.

“Beautiful,” I said softly.

Lieselotte’s eyes widened in shock. She turned to me and frantically fixed her hair. “Y-Your Highness?! W-Were you looking just now?!”

“S-Sorry. Um, you have a beautiful neck, so I think you would also look lovely with your hair up,” I said. It was a slip of the tongue. *Looks like I’m flustered as well. I feel as though I saw something I shouldn’t have.*

“Your Highness!” Lieselotte shrieked, her face bright red. She stomped up to me. “I am fully aware that I am at fault for letting my guard down in the castle, thinking no one was watching. However, peeping is unacceptable, especially for someone of your status! Lastly, I take issue with your brazen wording!”

“Yes, I apologize. It was my fault in the first place for making you wait in the heat. I’m truly sorry.”

“It’s improper to intentionally point out a lady’s mistake!” she continued, tears in her eyes. “There were other options, such as, for example, subtly alerting me to your presence or courteously pretending you saw nothing!”

As I was struggling to think of a way to calm her down, the Voices of the Gods came to my aid.

“Lieselotte just can’t stop scolding Sieg!” Lord Endoh said. **“But judging from her expression, she isn’t angry—her eloquent outburst comes from tremendous shame!”**

“She’s probably also embarrassed because Sieg praised her in a weird way,” Lady Kobayashee said. **“Combined with the shame of being caught making a mess of her hair, she doesn’t know how to feel anymore.”**

“Oh, so it’s less about the neck comment and more that she’s ashamed she let down her guard?”

“Probably. Liese-tan’s half-crying because the maiden in her wants to look perfect at all times in front of the person she loves.”

“Wait, but I’m glad Lieselotte let down her guard here,” I let out.

My fiancée froze.

“Er... What I meant was, you’ll be living here one day, so I hope you can feel at home.” I candidly expressed my thoughts. “Besides, it’s fine for you to let down your guard in front of me. We’re going to be a family one day, spending our daily lives together. That’s what being engaged means, doesn’t it?”

“An implicit proposal combined with a princely smile!” Lord Endoh shouted. **“Now that’s a killer combo!”**

“That’s our Sieg,” Lady Kobayashee said. **“Liese-tan’s close to a KO!”**

I couldn’t quite understand the gods’ vocabulary, but at any rate, Lieselotte didn’t seem angry with me anymore. She was looking at the ground, her face bright red.

I gently took her hand in mine. “The sun is too strong here. Shall we relax inside?”

She nodded awkwardly and I brought her indoors.

I hope it won’t be long before this sweet girl can feel at ease spending her everyday life here.

July, During Summer Break: Lieselotte Toils over Sieg’s Present

It was a few days into summer break. Lieselotte sat in the Riefenstahl manor’s sunny lounge, focusing intently on her work.

One of her younger sisters, Adelina, happened to pass by. “What?! Lieselotte, are you making *another* ribbon?!”

Her twin sister Katrina, who was accompanying her, looked at Lieselotte’s hands and gave a stiff smile. The twins had witnessed their older sister embroider similar-looking ribbons countless times in the past few days.

“Just how many have you made?” Katrina asked, aghast. “It’s scary at this point. What if they contain a grudge?”

Lieselotte shook her head firmly. “You don’t understand. Not only is His Highness royalty, he will become king one day. Thus, he interacts with only the country’s finest items on a daily basis. I can’t possibly give something substandard to someone with such exquisite taste. House Riefenstahl’s honor is

at stake, and even if it weren't, for someone as graceful as His Highness—"

"Yeah, yeah, we know all about how great Prince Siegwald is," Katrina said.

"Don't you try to ignore me. The point is, this is a battle for House Riefenstahl's pride!"

The twins slowly shook their heads and rebutted with cold looks in their eyes.

"No, I don't think anyone would expect that much from their fiancée's handiwork," Adelina said.

"If anything, I think it'd be more endearing if it were a little amateurish."

"W-Well, His Highness is very generous, so I'm sure he would not mind if it were a little rough around the edges," Lieselotte said. "However, this is going to adorn the handle of his primary magic wand! If there is a mediocre trinket mixed in with all of the first-rate items surrounding him, someone is sure to question the discrepancy!"

"Really? Who would be so rude to the prince?"

"Even if they did, I'm pretty sure he'd just brag about how his fiancée made it. That'd shut the person up."

"It would cause His Highness unnecessary embarrassment!" Lieselotte said, raising her voice.

As they were arguing, a maid came to the lounge. "Lady Lieselotte, the merchant has arrived."

"Oh, he's early. Please take him to the drawing room. I'll be right there!"

The maid lowered her head and left.

"Anyway, we must all treat this task with the utmost importance," Lieselotte said as she put away the needle and thread. "Do you understand, Adelina, Katrina?" She glared at the twins.

"You just want to show off to the guy you like, right?" Adelina said. "Don't make it sound bigger than it really is."

"Wait, don't tell me the merchant is here because of the ribbon..." Katrina said.

Lieselotte nodded. “Yes, that’s right. I’m purchasing a few fabrics dyed Tyrian purple.”

The moment she mentioned the rare and expensive cloth, the twins balked.

“How much are you spending on a little ribbon?! Are you stupid?!”

“That’s so overbearing, Lieselotte! Your love is *way* too intense!”

“What problem is there with being intense?” Lieselotte asked. “Besides, I’m paying for them with the bounty I earned by subduing those bandits a while back. You have nothing to complain about.”

“*That’s* why you went to the neighboring territory?!”

“You defeated bandits for His Highness’s sake?! You really are too intense!”

“O-Oh, be quiet! It’s because I couldn’t make anything I was satisfied with. Ugh, the merchant is waiting, so I’m going!”

Lieselotte departed the room, leaving the twins to mumble amongst themselves.

“Seriously, if she loves him so much, why doesn’t she just tell him so?”

“Yeah. Some things should be higher priority than obsessively raising the quality of a ribbon.”

They sighed and glanced at each other.

“Well, hopefully His Highness understands that clumsy cuteness of hers!”

“It’s her fault for not being honest, but if a guy can’t even see through that, we won’t let him have our sister!”

The twins laughed. Despite everything they said, they loved their big sister to bits. Soon enough, they would learn that her relationship with her fiancé was taking a dramatic turn for the better...

August, During Summer Break: The Young Ladies of House Riefenstahl

It was the second day of my visit to the Riefenstahl estate. That afternoon, I

was going to take a walk with Lieselotte and Fiene in a flower garden said to be in its peak season. As we were getting into the carriage to go there...

“Fieeene, black-iron fowls have appeared in the western plains!” Miss Adelina exclaimed.

“Let’s go defeat them! You can practice your magic at the same time!” Miss Katrina added.

The twins ran up to the carriage, with Miss Cecilie walking behind them. The three of them were dressed for adventure.

“Black-iron fowls?” Fiene asked. “Th-The birds known for their unbelievably delicious meat?!” She whirled around to face the trio, seeming eager to join them.

Black-iron fowls were indeed said to have delicious meat, but more importantly, they were extremely aggressive and had sharp beaks and claws. They were rather tough monsters to deal with...though they likely wouldn’t stand a chance against three Riefenstahls and Fiene.

“H-Hey, don’t shout like that in the presence of His Highness!” Lieselotte said.

Fiene looked up at me with a start. She gulped in panic, but since I had already seen her eyes light up, I couldn’t help but chuckle.

“It looks like Miss Fiene would much rather go to the western plains than the flower garden,” I said. “I don’t mind. Why don’t you go with them?”

“Sorry, Your Highness and Lieselotte!” Miss Adelina did not miss a beat. “We’re borrowing Fiene!”

“It’s for the sake of preparing a great dinner for our important guests, so please forgive us!” Miss Katrina said.

The twins pulled Fiene by the hands. She lowered her head to me as she happily ran off with them. “I’m sorry, Your Highness! I’ll bring back delicious meat!”

Miss Cecilie, arriving after the twins, lowered her head deeply to me and then glanced up at Lieselotte. “To us, they might just be delicious game, but to people who can’t use magic, they’re dangerous monsters. We need to

exterminate them quickly, so please forgive us, Lieselotte.”

“Yes, protecting the people is the responsibility of the nobility,” my fiancée said. “Quite a lot of people pass through the western plains, including merchants, so it’s true that we should take action as soon as possible. Very well. Go, and be careful. However, tell Adelina and Katrina to give His Highness a proper apology when they return.” She sighed.

Miss Cecilie nodded firmly before running to catch up with her sisters.

“I’m very sorry for my sisters’ rudeness, Your Highness,” Lieselotte said, lowering her head deeply.

“No, there’s no need to apologize,” I said hurriedly. “Raise your head, all right? I agree that the monsters should be taken care of as soon as possible. Also, you and your sisters don’t have to be so formal towards me. I’m here in my private time. Right now, I’m just your fiancé.”

“E-Even if you say so, I am to blame for being unable to keep my younger sisters under control.” Lieselotte’s face was slightly flushed. “If you noticed, they only took Fiene with them. They must dislike me because I’m always nagging them.”

“Nah, they love Lieselotte,” Lord Endoh said. “They just aren’t honest with their feelings, like her.”

“Yep, to the point where it’s heart-wrenching for us otome gamers,” Lady Kobayashee said. “Basically, they were being considerate and giving their precious big sister a proper date with her beloved fiancé!”

I see. So that’s how it is.

“Don’t you think your sisters were being considerate of us?” I chuckled.

Lieselotte finally stopped apologizing. She tilted her head, doubtful.

I took her hand in mine. “I think they took Miss Fiene with them because they wanted to let the engaged couple go on a date.”

“Wh-Wh-What?!” My fiancée instantly turned bright red.

“Lieselotte’s overheating!” Lord Endoh said. “Is it the summer sun that’s making her dizzy? Or is it Sieg’s dazzling smile?!”

“Hang in there, Liese-tan!” Lady Kobayashee added. **“Control your tsun! Take the chance your sisters gave you without shame!”**

Lieselotte gripped my hand as if obeying the Voices of the Gods she couldn’t possibly have heard. “S-Since my sisters are gone, I shall take full responsibility for providing protection and hospitality for Your Highness!”

Although her words were positive, I couldn’t help but laugh at her refusal to admit we were going on a date. It seemed that all of House Riefenstahl’s young ladies experienced difficulty with honest expression. *Well, the first of them, Lieselotte, is immensely adorable for it.*

“How dependable.” I chuckled. “Thank you. Shall we go, then?”

Lieselotte glared at me as if she wanted to call me mean. However, her hand never left mine, not only as she was getting into the carriage, but for the entire ride.

August, Last Day of Summer Break: A Letter, a Smile, and Sweet Words

It was the last day of summer break, during the period of time when evening turned to night. I was in my office, writing a report on the places I had inspected over the summer.

A cool breeze blew in from the window. I looked at the dusk sky outside—a purple expanse that still held some light. The color reminded me of the eyes of my fiancée, Lieselotte. *What is she doing at this time?*

The chamberlain called to me. “Prince Siegwald, someone from House Riefenstahl is here with a letter from Lady Lieselotte.”

I tilted my head. It was unusual I would be called while the messenger was still present. Normally, I would be informed the letter had been received.

I was about to tell the chamberlain to politely accept it as per usual when the Voices of the Gods rang out.

“Can you hear us, Sieg?” Lord Endoh asked. **“It’s not just a letter. Lieselotte herself is here!”**

“Just now, she asked to keep her arrival a secret because you’ll see each other at school tomorrow anyway,” Lady Kobayashee said. “But it’s super cute how she’s looking up at the light coming from your window and smiling with satisfaction, so hurry and come outside!”

I gasped. Hearing the voices of the gods who watched over Lieselotte was proof she was here.

“Ah,” I said. “School resumes tomorrow, so this letter will be the last of our summer correspondence. It’s special, so I think I’ll accept it in person.”

I stood up and the chamberlain lowered his head, delighted. Though Lieselotte had told him to keep her presence a secret, he must have been reluctant to let her go after she had come all this way.

The moment Lieselotte saw me, she shouted, “Y-Your Highness?! Wh-Why on earth would you come outside in person?!”

“It’s just as weird for the daughter of a marquis to deliver a letter in person,” Lord Endoh said.

“She must’ve been thinking, ‘If I’m lucky, I’ll be able to see him. Even if I can’t, I want to be as close to him as possible. Just knowing he’s on the other side of that window makes me feel happy,’” Lady Kobayashee said. **“Now that’s what I call a maiden in love!”**

I smiled at Lieselotte without hesitation. “When we’re back at school, we won’t be sending letters to each other anymore, will we? The thought was rather moving, so I couldn’t help but want to pick it up myself. Is that also why you came to deliver it in person? Or did you come to see me?”

“U-Um, well...” She blushed and looked away, clearly troubled.

I guess I shouldn’t tease her too much. “Either way, I’m glad I came outside. Not only do I get to receive a letter from you, I even get to see you. Oh, while you’re here, would you mind accompanying me for a short break?”

I held out my hand, intending on leading her inside. However, instead of taking it, she took a step back.

“I-I didn’t mean to get in the way of your work!” Lieselotte said. “I’m well aware of how busy you are, so please don’t mind me!”

“You aren’t getting in the way. In fact, I was only able to get through this summer because your letters encouraged me. If I can have a little chat with you now, I’m sure I’ll be able to work very hard afterwards. Think of it as helping me out, all right?”

“Liese-tan’s pretty lovey-dovey in her letters, just like she was in her memoir,” Lady Kobayashee said. **“She’s more honest when she can calm down and take her time thinking.”**

“But also, when you flash your princely smile and shower her with sweet words like you did just now, she goes weak in the knees and listens because she doesn’t know what to do anymore,” Lord Endoh said.

As Lady Kobayashee said, Lieselotte’s letters contained many words of concern for my well-being. They were heartwarming and I could feel her love in them. And as Lord Endoh said, she was currently relenting and taking my hand.

I see. If I want to make Lieselotte honest, what I need is a letter, a smile, and sweet words.

“Y-Your Highness, I just had a bad feeling,” my perceptive fiancée said. “You aren’t thinking anything strange, are you?!”

I simply smiled back.

Semester 2, October: She’s Become Sweeter When We’re Alone

“Congratulations! Your Lieselotte has evolved into a tsundereally-pissed.”

The spirited voice belonged to Lord Endoh, a god from a foreign realm.

It was autumn. There was a little over a month to go before the Festival of Gratitude, where we were to have a decisive battle against the Witch of Yore who wished to destroy the world. The gods had informed me that my fiancée, Lieselotte, needed someone to support her emotionally at least until then, or else she would be possessed by the witch and most likely meet her doom.

I want to be that emotional support. I don't want to give up my beloved to anyone else. That was what I—Siegwald Fitzenhagen—vowed as her fiancé when I realized my own feelings for her. I endeavored to grow closer to her, but as the crown prince, I'd always treated everyone equally without ever revealing my inner feelings.

Thus, Lieselotte seemed to find my current efforts unnatural. She refused to accept them, instead blushing, running away, and rejecting me.

Yesterday, I inadvertently revealed these concerns to my friends. Hearing lines such as “All you have to do is chase her into a corner where she can't escape!” and “Break a leg, Sieg!” encouraged me, and I resolved to chase her down one way or another.

Yet today, for some reason, Lieselotte said, “Your Highness, I adore you; as such, I will not succumb to the trifling attacks of the Witch of Yore.” This straightforward confession prompted the gods to say she “evolved into a *tsundereally-pissed*,” and it allowed me to express my true thoughts to her as well, even the improper ones. We now understood each other's feelings, so I suppose it worked out in the end.

It was a blissful day, so much so that the gods' cheers—mainly those of the Color Commentator, Lady Kobayashee—rained loudly from the heavens. The unexpected turn of events did come with one issue: Lieselotte, embarrassed, asked me not to look at her face, so I had to stare in a fixed direction for a while. She was still cute, though, so all in all, it was a good day.

The weather was lovely that autumn afternoon, almost as if the environment was congratulating us as well. Reluctant to leave each other after those heartfelt confessions, we decided to take a leisurely stroll in the castle's gardens. We walked side by side in the area where the roses were in bloom.

“Lieselotte— Liese, are you cold?” I asked.

At long last, our feelings were mutual. The nicknames we now allowed ourselves to call each other were proof. I still felt a little ticklish when I called her Liese.

Lieselotte smiled shyly. “No, Your Highness. I am not cold.”

“I said I wanted you to call me Sieg too. You don’t have to speak so formally with me either.”

She awkwardly averted her gaze. “Th-This may be a private area for royalty, but it’s still part of the castle. A-Also, I’m not used to this situation yet, so I couldn’t possibly get even closer to you...”

What she mumbled in the latter half was likely her true reason. In the past, she probably would’ve only said the first part, turning it into a flat rejection.

The change put a grin on my face. “I see. In that case, I don’t mind waiting. Oh, the wind has picked up. Are you sure you aren’t cold, Liese? If you are, we can view the garden from the sunroom instead.”

“No, Your Highness. The sun is warm today, and I am wearing my overcoat. If anything, I feel a little hot, and the wind is pleasant. Since the roses are blooming so beautifully, I’d rather stay here where I can enjoy their fragran—” Lieselotte gasped, and her expression turned serious. “No, it *is* indeed cold.”

“Huh?” *Wasn’t she politely declining my suggestion? In fact, didn’t she just say she felt hot?*

“Oh, that was an exaggeration. I *am* wearing my overcoat, so walking in the garden isn’t an issue. It’s just that...my fingertips are a little cold.”

Lieselotte held out her hands to show she wasn’t wearing gloves. Though it was autumn, it wasn’t yet cold enough to warrant them. I wasn’t wearing them either. *The chamberlain should be nearby, waiting for orders. Should I have him bring gloves for Lieselotte?*

“Sieg, you look like you’re thinking something off the mark,” Lord Endoh said, exasperated. **“This is clearly a case of, ‘I really wish you’d hold my cold hand, wink wink nudge nudge!’”**

I stiffened. My fiancée was indeed holding her hand out unnaturally and glancing up at me. *Um, is that what she wants?*

“My right hand is especially cold!” Lieselotte said. “Y-You know, it occurred to me earlier that your body temperature seems a little higher than mine. I assume the same would be true of your hands, but, um...”

Apparently so.

I gently took her right hand in mine and resumed walking. She didn't object. In fact, she had a happy smile on her face—or rather, it was the smile of someone desperately trying to contain their joy. From the look of it, Lord Endoh was right.

My fiancée, who was usually prickly, came closer to me and even rested her head on my shoulder.

What?! That's so cute! Seriously. Lieselotte is absolutely adorable! My fiancée is the personification of cuteness! But if I react to this, I have a sneaking suspicion she'll get embarrassed and run away.

It was as if a bad-tempered kitten had finally warmed up to me, and I was overcome with an intense urge to squirm with joy. However, if I did that in front of Lieselotte, who was even fussier than a kitten, she was sure to dart off. Thus, I made an effort to keep a calm expression as I walked, tightening my lips to prevent any strange sounds from escaping my mouth.

Hm? Didn't we just pass by here? Which spots have I brought her to, and which have I yet to show her? I'm not sure anymore. Ah well, let's continue.

The garden was filled with a strange silence. Like me, Lieselotte kept her eyes forward, not saying a word as she walked. In her case, it was likely out of embarrassment.



“Man, Sieg’s pretty dense, isn’t he?” Lord Endoh said. “Lieselotte made her intentions really obvious just now. I’m starting to think it’s not *just* the witch’s fault their relationship turned sour in the game.”

Never mind. It wasn’t completely silent. The Voices of the Gods were present, although only I could hear them.

Lady Kobayashee laughed dryly. **“Hmm, I think it’s more that he’s timid. There’re times when he’s *too* perceptive, after all. He’s also quick to understand what we’re saying and to then take action. But, well, a tsundere is a double-edged sword.”**

“Oh, I see. The time he spent with Lieselotte was time spent getting the tsun treatment. Lieselotte regrets what she did, but that’s just proof her actions hurt him. It makes sense he’d lose his courage if she’s treated him that way ever since they were kids.”

The gods’ idle talk made me wonder. I hadn’t been aware of it myself, but perhaps that was the reason I was never able to convey my feelings to Lieselotte well.

Yes, that’s right. Thinking about it, even this time, I could’ve just been frank and told her I loved her. Instead of giving her gifts or creating more opportunities for us to interact—cheap tricks to make her like me more—I should’ve just expressed my feelings in a straightforward manner.

In the end, I was ashamed of myself for not being able to do anything until Lieselotte made the first move. Not that I was going to pin the blame on her. The issue was probably in my nature, rather than her “tsun.” I was forced to realize I was a coward.

If I hadn’t received courage from the gods, I never would’ve been able to get this close to her, nor would I even know how cute she was. Then, the Witch of Yore would’ve taken her from me... I shuddered at the thought.

“The darkness encroaching on me and the voice coiling around me... Those were the Witch of Yore,” Lieselotte said, bringing up the very topic I was thinking of.

How do I respond? I’d never told Lieselotte she was being targeted by the

Witch of Yore, the great evil that had tried to destroy our world numerous times with her immense darkness. If she were seized by fear upon learning her enemy's true identity, it could threaten her emotional stability, which we needed in order to overthrow the witch.

However, she had seemingly determined the darkness's identity on her own and warded it off. Still, that didn't mean it was safe to tell her everything. If she knew the witch was trying to possess her, and that the gods predicted it was a very real possibility...

Lieselotte giggled. "Please don't look so troubled. I'll be fine. No matter how formidable my enemy is, I will defeat her. When I'm by your side, I'm confident I can win any battle. I feel power flowing into me from where we're connected." Her voice was calm, but her face was tilted downward and her ears were flushed. She was probably trying to fight her embarrassment.

I noticed the warmth coming from our joined hands. It did calm me down as well...but only if I ignored my quickened heartbeat and the feelings of euphoria, excitement, and shyness from holding hands with the person I loved.

Lieselotte took several deep breaths, perhaps because she was feeling the same way as me. After calming herself down, she continued, "Your Highness, to me, you are light itself. Why would I be afraid of darkness when I am permitted to be by your side? Please, tell me everything you know and do not try to face the enemy alone. I wish to share half the burden. I would not be able to stand letting myself be protected while contributing nothing. Besides, we are engaged, which makes us partners."

I nodded without waiting for the gods' advice. "Thank you. You're right. We'll be married one day, so we share the same fate. I'm sorry. I think I forgot how grateful I am that you try to walk with me on equal footing." I took a deep breath. "What I'm about to say may scare you, but I want you to promise me you won't distance yourself from me or anyone else. I, too, want to share half of your pain. I want us to support each other."

Lieselotte looked up at me, stunned. "It seems I am the one who must apologize. It was conceited of me to think it should only be me supporting you. Let us support each other. That would be wonderful. Oh, you truly are my light,

Your Highness. You always illuminate the correct path for me!”

I scratched my cheek. “Um, I don’t think I said anything *that* grand...”

“No. My heart feels lighter now, and I am at ease. Even if the truth shakes me, you will be there to support me, will you not? Now, please tell me.”

Her sincerely happy smile made me relent. I took her to the gazebo, and we sat side by side on the bench. There, I told her about everything that had happened thus far, everything that was going to happen, and the Witch of Yore’s horrific plan.

It truly was terrifying for one to discover they had been the target of such repulsive scheming from spring until now. After hearing everything, Lieselotte was trembling so much I felt sorry for her. Her reaction was only natural.

“Let us beat her to a pulp,” Lieselotte said quietly.

What?!

“Erm, Liese, what do you mean by that?” I looked at her and noticed the expression on her face. “Oh...”

“Lieselotte’s eyes are filled with fury,” Lord Endoh said.

“Whoa, she’s royally pissed!” Lady Kobayashee said. **“Well, she *did* evolve after she snapped at the witch last night, so I guess this reaction was to be expected!”**

Lieselotte was angrier than I’d ever seen her—and I’d known her for a long time. Her trembling hadn’t been out of fear, but rage.

She began to cackle. “Very well, bring it on. You tried to possess me so you could kill Fiene? You tried to convince me His Highness had abandoned me so you could take over my body? You tried to rob me of my family, my love, my body, and everything in the world? How ridiculous. You’ve got some nerve, Witch of Yore!”

The moment she yelled, it was as if a persistent unpleasant feeling had been dispelled. I hadn’t realized it was there until it was gone.

“I will not lose to such an underhanded opponent! Ever! Let us beat her

thoroughly, Your Highness. Yes, the Witch of Yore's defeat shall be added to the many glorious feats you've achieved during your reign!"

At this point, I had to try to calm her down. "Try not to say things like that, Liese. My father is currently king, so my reign hasn't begun yet. Also, I don't know of any feats I've achieved. Are you already planning for them to happen?"

"Planning? Your future achievements are as good as guaranteed."

"Erm... Let's calm down for a moment, Liese. Deep breaths, all right? Breathe in, breathe out..."

Those words were enough to make Lieselotte listen. She followed my instructions, taking deep breaths, and finally returned to her usual neutral expression. "I apologize for losing my composure, Your Highness. I understand what you meant before. In the past, if I had known I was being targeted, I might have run away from the country by myself, or chosen to take my life rather than let myself be used. However, I am different now. I will stand up against the Witch of Yore. I have resolved to fight her alongside you."

Her eyes didn't seem completely back to normal yet, but at any rate, she wasn't seized by fear, and she was even optimistic.

That's good...I hope. She isn't still in a state of confusion, is she?

"I really do feel invincible as I am now," Lieselotte said. "Like the Witch of Yore, I'm only thinking of how we can use this to our advantage in the future." She grinned, proud. There was no hesitation in her eyes, and she looked extremely stable.

Yes, this is good. I smiled and nodded, relieved. "I'm glad to have someone as dependable as you by my side, Liese. Oh, that's right. On that day when the Witch of Yore made you faint, you said the only thing that scared you was the thought of my leaving your side. I hope you understand now that such a thing will never happen."

"Yes... Well, um, I won't say I *wasn't* afraid of various things in the past, but that day, I overcame my fears, and now they have become my strength. So I'm not afraid of anything anymore." Lieselotte mumbled her words quickly, embarrassed.

I couldn't catch everything, but I heard the "I'm not afraid of anything anymore" clearly.

"Like I said when you princess-carried Liese-tan home from school, as long as you're by her side, she'll never lose to the Witch of Yore!" Lady Kobayashee said.

"When two people love each other, they can overcome anything," Lord Endoh said. **"Let's pummel that witch!"**

The voices coming from the heavens were very reassuring. *Yes, we'll be fine. We can win against the Witch of Yore.*

"We *finally* got to see Liese-tan's lovey-dovey side! How dare the witch try to get in the way of your PDA?! Even if the world's okay with it, I'm not!"

"Huh, Kobayashi's pissed off too. I get the feeling the Witch of Yore's gonna be bombarded with way too much firepower."

I could only vaguely understand what Lady Kobayashee said, but they had a point. Lieselotte was finally more open with her feelings, yet our sweet time together had become tense due to the Witch of Yore. It gave me yet another reason to despise the witch, even if I was simply taking out my anger on her.

Of course, trying to harm my beloved Lieselotte and plotting to destroy the entire world were both crimes deserving the death penalty.

"When everything's settled down, I hope I'll be able to enjoy some relaxed time with you," I said.

Lieselotte's face instantly turned red. "Wh-What?! Where is your sense of danger, Your Highness?! Our country and the world are facing a crisis!" In a slightly sweet voice, she added, "Oh, um, it's not that I don't want to, though!"

Her loving side had finally come out.

Yes, she's adorable. I want to do more of this "piddie-yay" thing with her. Well, I don't know what the term means, but based on the context, it probably refers to being sweet and loving with each other. I want to have more "piddie-yay," and for that, I'll need the Witch of Yore to make a swift, thorough exit, I thought with renewed resolve.

Semester 2, October: She Wasn't a Tsundere When She Was Five

I, Crown Prince Siegwald Fitzenhagen, and my noblewoman fiancée, Lieselotte, were still students, but due to our social positions, there were times when we needed to attend large-scale evening parties together. However, *we were still students*, so we were merely expected to attend.

It was halfway through autumn, and today, we were at one of those boring parties where our only job was to exist. However, since *Liese* and I had confessed our feelings the other day, I was secretly elated just to be next to her when she was beautifully dressed up.

There was a break in the wave of people coming to greet us, and Lieselotte took that moment to pout and scold me. “Your Highness, I think it is wonderful you are trying to be liked by everyone as the crown prince. However, I cannot say the same of the way you are deceiving women.”

I hadn't the faintest clue what she was talking about. “Um, I don't recall doing that. Was I deceiving people?” I tilted my head.

Lieselotte nodded with an extremely serious expression. “Yes. Your smile is far too dazzling today, Your Highness. Any young woman who is the recipient of such a beautiful smile at such a close distance is bound to fall in love.”

I don't think it's bound to happen.

She ignored my confusion and continued with an annoyed look on her face. “You need to be more aware of how attractive your face is. After all, the star of the party is—”

“Basically, she's just jealous,” Lord Endoh said. **“She's actually praising you a lot.”**

“Liese-tan's saying this because every time she sees your smile, she falls in love with you all over again!” Lady Kobayashee said.

Lieselotte's “lecture” continued, but the Voices of the Gods spoke over her, clearing things up for me.

I chuckled and took her hand. “I'm sorry for making you worry. However, if

that's the case, won't it be fine if my fiancée stays close to me?"

Lieselotte tilted her head ever so slightly.

"Then everyone would understand that my smile is brought out by your beauty, wouldn't they?"

"Lieselotte explodes as Sieg busts out that very same princely smile right in front of her at point-blank range! It's super effective!"

"The words accompanying it were also extremely sweet. He did a splendid job. Liese-tan's bright red and weak in the knees, but I'm sure her nervousness and jealousy have been blown away."

As the gods said, Lieselotte was blushing and trembling.

"Was that on purpose, though?" Lord Endoh muttered. **"It's scary how perfect a prince Sieg is..."**

Lady Kobayashee laughed. **"He's a real-deal prince, after all! Sieg's always saying stuff like that. I think his smooth moves are ingrained in him by now. Either that, or he was born with them."**

I awkwardly scratched my cheek. The reason I was grinning enough today to warrant a lecture from Lieselotte was indeed because she was far too beautiful. So, it probably wasn't on purpose.

Besides, Lieselotte was the reason I had originally begun paying attention to my language, the way I smiled, how I interacted with people, and minor aspects of my conduct. I had wanted to be a proper prince for her.

I thought back to the day I first met her, when she was five.

At the time, my father was the kingdom's crown prince. On top of that, I was an only child for a long time, so I'd say I had been quite spoiled growing up.

I remember when I first met her, I was seven years old and not the slightest bit princely; I was a lazy and spoiled child. In order to motivate me to apply myself, I was introduced to Lady Lieselotte from the Riefenstahl Marquisate. Despite her young age, she was already known to be intelligent and sensible. According to my parents, they thought interacting with a capable younger girl

would make me worry more about myself.

I had already met her father before. He was a strict and imposing knight, so before meeting Lieselotte, I thought, *What if she's scary? I don't want to be scolded by a girl younger than me.*

When I actually met her, she turned out to be an extremely pretty girl. She was a child, but everything about her was breathtaking, from her gait to the blonde hair neatly arranged at her shoulders, her serious aura, and her doll-like beauty.

The moment she saw my face, her amethyst eyes widened in awe. "A real prince."

Her sparkling eyes immediately made me think, *I don't want to disappoint her.* From that moment on, I vowed to be a prince.

"Don't be so stiff," I said, trying my best to sound like a prince. "Let's play together."

I distinctly remember my mother smiling fondly as she watched me hold out my hand.

"There's a tree over there with a lot of small birds," I said, tugging Lieselotte's hand. She nodded and followed me.

After walking for a while, she seemed to relax somewhat. "I'm sorry for not greeting you properly earlier," she said.

She sounded glum, but if she had given me a perfect formal greeting, I might not have found her as cute as I did.

"No, don't apologize," I said. "It didn't bother me."

Her expression became even more apologetic. "I'm normally better than that. I even take care of my younger sisters. I was just so surprised by how handsome you were, Your Highness," she said, blushing.

Her words made me feel ticklish. I felt an unbecoming grin coming on, and tried to steer it towards the "refined" smile that people wanted from me.

I chuckled. "Thank you. I'm happy to hear that."

My attempt seemed to succeed. Her cheeks grew even rosier, and tears rose to her eyes as she nodded shyly.

Feeling even better—and a little embarrassed—I tightened my hold on her hand and brought her around the castle garden. I wanted to attract her attention as much as I could, so I showed her all the wonderful things I knew: trees, flowers, fruit, birds, butterflies... I felt her admiring gaze grow stronger with each sight, and it made me want to act more like a big brother to her.

I wanted to have more things to teach her the next time we met. I wanted to be able to behave more like a prince. I made an effort to smile the way she liked at all times. I began applying myself to the lessons I previously hadn't cared for.

That day was, without a doubt, the turning point in my training as a prince.

"So, well, I really do think my smile exists for you," I said without thinking. I felt Lieselotte squeeze my hand in shock and realized how embarrassing my words had been—

"Wh-What are you talking about?!"

—however, seeing her blush and squirm made me feel strangely confident. I grinned. "You like my smile, don't you, Liese? That's why I'm always smiling."

"Please don't tease me so much, Your Highness! H-How could I possibly say whether or not I like it in a place like this?!" Lieselotte glared at me.

We were in a corner of the lively hall. No one was nearby and people didn't seem to be paying much attention to us, but we *were* still in the middle of an evening party. Someone could very well be listening to us.

However, her words contained one key point.

"In other words, she'd be able to say it if you were somewhere else," Lord Endoh said.

"Liese-tan doesn't deny that she looves Sieg's smile!" Lady Kobayashee said. **"In fact, *Lieselotte's Memoir* is full of praise for it, to the point where it makes you go, 'Huh? There are *that* many ways to compliment something?' I think you'll be able to get her to say it when it's just the two of you!"**

I gave a firm nod. The gods' advice was similar to my own thoughts.

The five-year-old Lieselotte who was very honest with her affection was cute, but the shy tsun de rais Lieselotte was also adorable.

My smiles for her today are as sincere as always.

Chapter 2: The Doubts and Concerns of the Gods

We continued to chat until we had more or less exhausted our supply of stories. We covered the time between my first encounter with the Voices of the Gods to the ball in late autumn, when what was supposed to have been a battle against the Witch of Yore ended with the Goddess of Creation begging on her knees. We also reminisced on the Festival of Gratitude at the royal palace, which was the day I had to say goodbye to my two friends for quite some time.

“Dang, a lot happened, huh?” Lady Kobayashi said.

Lord Endo, Lieselotte, and I nodded firmly. There really had been a whirlwind of events leading to this auspicious day.

“Oh, I was wondering,” Lord Endo said. “What happened after we lost the ability to see into this world? Were there any big changes?”

“Ah, yes,” I said. “I believe the first major event was Miss Fiene and Baldur’s formal engagement. It was right after the late autumn ball.”

“Oh, we heard about that!” Lady Kobayashi said. “From Liese-tan—or the Liese-tan doll, I guess? Well, it really was Liese-tan!”

It wasn’t the surprised reaction I was expecting. *A Lieselotte doll...?*

Before I could inquire about the doll, Lord Endo said, “It happened quickly, huh? I thought it’d take longer with those two... Well, mainly Fiene. She has a pretty complicated situation because of her trauma, so it wouldn’t have been surprising if she wasn’t ready for a while.”

His response gave rise to a new question.

“Fiene...has trauma?” Lieselotte appeared to have picked up on the same word as me. She looked extremely serious, likely because she was concerned about her younger sister.

“Hey, Aoto, should we tell them?” Lady Kobayashi asked.

“I think it’s fine if it’s them,” Lord Endo said. “Actually, I think it’s better if they

know.”

“Oh, maybe. It seems like Lireнна’s the only one in this world who knows everything, but she’s pretty useless. She was saying she didn’t know what to do about it.”

The two briefly exchanged eye contact as they spoke.

Finally, Lady Kobayashi seemed to have made up her mind. “Um, Lireнна told us that Fiene’s trauma is related to her life as Eve.”

Eve was the mother of our world’s human race. On the day of the ball, we had learned that Fiene was her reincarnation.

“Eve watched her husband, Adam—the father of humankind—get killed right in front of her eyes by the evil god Kuon, who was in love with her,” Lord Endo said. “What’s more, Baldur’s the reincarnation of that murdered husband.”

“Oh my,” Lieselotte said.

“Baldur...” I murmured, shocked.

That the two had reunited and come to love each other again was indeed a touching story of fate. However, in their past lives they had experienced a horrible tragedy. One was murdered, leaving his beloved behind, while the other watched her beloved die in front of her eyes. How much pain had been inflicted on their hearts and souls?

Lieselotte and I gulped, unable to say anything.

Lady Kobayashi made an awkward expression. “Lireнна said it’s ’cause of the trauma that Fiene sought power and became as strong as she is now. Well, she also said Fiene’s starting stats in the game were low for balance reasons. That, and Kuon’s condescending mindset. He figured a cute girl could only be so strong.”

“Even the gods were surprised by how maxed-out Fiene’s stats were, and it’s all because Eve’s wishes manifested in her,” Lord Endo said. “She thought, ‘I want to protect him this time. I don’t want to let him die. If we meet again, I swear we’ll survive together.’ When I heard this story, I felt bad for calling Fiene a gorilla.”

“Yeah.” Lady Kobayashi smiled weakly at Lord Endo, then cleared her throat. “Well, anyway, that’s how much Fiene’s been influenced by Eve. Lireнна was worried she might be afraid of loving someone, and that she might wanna distance herself from Bal in particular, since he’s Adam’s reincarnation and extra special to her.”

“The love of her life was murdered before her eyes,” Lieselotte said. “That could certainly make one feel hesitant to love again. Since Kuon killed Adam out of jealousy, she must think her beloved wouldn’t have died if he hadn’t loved her.” She sounded deeply sympathetic.

I nodded. *That must be one of the reasons those two had second thoughts for a while despite clearly loving each other. It had been especially strange because their family circumstances made it so they could have gotten engaged much earlier.*

Lady Kobayashi sighed. “That’s why I dunno if we should tell them or not. Telling them might provoke trauma, but knowing it’s okay now that Kuon’s sealed could assuage their fears. Lireнна couldn’t decide either. She thinks if Fiene’s lost the memory of her beloved husband being killed before her eyes, she’ll be happier staying that way. In that sense, jostling her memories and making her remember might be a bad idea.”

“They’d also feel pretty awkward if we just went, ‘You guys were married in a past life!’” Lord Endo added.

Well, it’s true. That aspect probably won’t be an issue now that they’re engaged, though.

“For now,” I said, “unless something happens—or one of them expresses their doubts—I don’t think you need to tell them. You wouldn’t want to bring back painful memories.”

“Since Baldur is with her now, I think Fiene would be fine even if she remembered,” Lieselotte said. “I’m sure those two would be able to overcome it. However, I agree there’s no need to push them into confronting it. If Fiene is feeling anxious when it comes time to get married, then we can disclose the reason and give her the encouragement she needs to get over it, I think.”

It took some meandering, but Lieselotte and I ended up with the same

conclusion: maintain the status quo. There was no need to poke a sleeping dragon. If Fiene was very afraid of love, then we would have to reassure her by telling her the evil god was sealed. However, she didn't seem to have reached that point yet.

"That's true," Lady Kobayashi said. "She agreed to the engagement even without us saying a thing! We'll continue keeping it under wraps for now!" She smiled cheerfully and leaned closer to us, eager to move on to the next topic now that her worries had been assuaged. "Hey, Liese-tan, you talked a bit about it before, but do you know anything more specific about what it was like when those two got engaged?"

Lieselotte looked up at the sky, searching her memories. "Yes, Fiene and Baldur both reported it to me. I was told they had gone to the theater that day. It was a slightly upper-class one that also serves as a social venue for the nobility. There, they..."

"Sir Bal, I'm starting to think it'd be better if I got some experience with upper-class settings before going to the Festival of Gratitude at the royal palace," Fiene said.

"Would you like to go to the theater with me, then?" Baldur asked. "It'll give you the opportunity to have friendly conversation with whoever's present before the curtain rises, but the main event is simply watching the show. There's a formal dress code, but no one's going to ask you to dance, so you can take it easy. Also...it's a classic place to go on a date."

"Compared to our usual dates, which consist of hunting animals and training at the mountains behind the school, the difference is probably going to make me dizzy, huh?"

The day after that conversation, Baldur brought Fiene to the theater for an evening play. It was a romantic drama that was currently popular with young women. Because of that, several of the people they exchanged greetings with were familiar faces from school.

Even so, Fiene was clearly very nervous, so Baldur wrapped up the socializing a little early and led her to their seats. They sat side by side on the sofa in the

box, which he had reserved by using House Riefenstahl's name.

After a few moments, Baldur muttered, "Honestly, I was surprised."

"Huh?" Fiene tilted her head. "What was surprising? Oh, did I make some kind of mistake?"

"No, it's the opposite. You didn't make any mistakes at all. In fact, you greatly surpassed my expectations." Baldur's expression was serious.

Fiene gave an exasperated sigh. "Don't you think it's rude to call that surprising? I *was* raised by the Fae Princess, and Lieselotte has made sure my etiquette is up to par. I can do pretty well if I switch to pretend-princess mode."

"Oh, no, I wasn't particularly concerned about that. You have strong core muscles, so I knew your curtsies would be smoother than any other young lady."

Fiene pressed her hand to her forehead as though she had a headache. "This is the problem with muscleheads. They dole out compliments without thinking... Sorry, I didn't mean to say that out loud. Well, what was surprising, then?"



“The content of your conversations. I was impressed by how easily and accurately you could discuss things like the classical play this one pays homage to. I came here with the intention of backing you up, but to be honest, I feel like I’ve been given the slip. The way you were talking, you could join a gathering of theater lovers. I’m sure they’d commend your knowledge.”

“Oh... When I was little, the bedtime stories mommy read to me and the scenarios we acted out with dolls were all taken directly from her noble education, apparently. Before I knew it, I’d learned most of the old stories out there. But it’s not like mommy took the books with her when she left home. She recited them to me from memory. Don’t you think she’s a monster?”

Baldur hummed, impressed. “That’s...incredible.”

“Anyway, a gathering of theater lovers, huh? That kind of thing might be nice.” Fiene smiled.

Baldur’s eyes widened. “This is exactly what I find most surprising. I thought you didn’t like that kind of overly noble thing. Not because you can’t act like a noble, but because you don’t want to. But earlier, you played the part of a perfect noblewoman, and you didn’t even seem like you were forcing yourself to. You looked like you were having fun, which surprised me. You seem unusually proactive today, and it was your idea to go to an upper-class establishment in the first place. Could it be that you haven’t done this kind of thing before?”

“Oh, you noticed? Yes, I had a bit of a change of heart...or I guess you could say I decided it’s time to accept my fate. I came here today to see what my future life will be like. Well, I think I’d be able to handle this for short periods of time. I’d rather hunt powerful monsters and establish a presence through military feats, but I know that’s not appropriate for a marquise. I’ll try my best to fit in with high society.”

“Are you saying...?” *Could it be? No, there’s no way.*

Deep blue eyes, filled with anticipation, gazed upon a girl with sky-blue eyes inherited from her father.

Fiene smiled radiantly. “I am. I’ve come to love my sister, you, and everyone else too much to run away from the royal capital. So I’ve decided to marry you and become a wife to the marquis, Sir Bal.”

Amidst the buzzing crowd in the theater, Fiene’s words rang remarkably clear, as if she herself were the lead actress. Baldur was willing to follow her anywhere in the world, yet she declared she would put down her roots right where she was. He’d never even dreamed of such joy.

Baldur began to stand up on reflex, but paused when the girl tilted her head quite dramatically.

“Oh, but before that, I’m thinking of serving the royal family as my sister’s bodyguard for a few years,” Fiene said. “In that case, should I stick with father and learn some things from him first? What’s the test to join the knights again? I have to beat up five or six full-fledged members?”

Baldur felt like he’d been hit with a wet blanket. He sat back down on the sofa, dejected. However, from the look on his face, he seemed to be taking her question seriously.

“Well, if you just want to *join* the knights, that’s possible,” he said. “But if you want to be part of the crown princess’s imperial guard, you’ll need to obtain a recommendation through connections and achievements, and then there’s a written exam and an interview. You probably don’t have to worry about connections since Lieselotte and His Highness will take care of that. As far as achievements go, standing out among your peers at school should do the trick...assuming the classroom lectures don’t hold you back. I think you just have to work a little harder until graduation.”

“That all sounds like a pain. Then again, what’re the other ways of gaining prestigious achievements as a noble? Doing business? Managing territory? Socializing? I’d much rather study than any of those. Well, I’ll do anything if it means I can stay with my sister, who’s helped me so much.”

“I see... So you made your decision because Lieselotte’s going to become crown princess soon, and you were thinking about what you’re going to do when that time comes. You want to stay with Lieselotte, huh? Not me,” Baldur muttered, melancholic.

Fiene laughed and patted him on his back, which felt strangely small even though it was supposed to be very broad. “Oh no, don’t be so depressed, Sir Bal. Didn’t you vow to stay with me no matter where I went? I know you’re always going to be around, so I was thinking of what else I wanted to do. The reason I want to gain prominence as a noble is so no one will complain about my becoming your wife—the wife of Marquis Riefenstahl.”

“I see. My uncle seems to think you’d make a good successor, though. Are you fine with not taking the reins yourself?”

“I’d rather leave the actual ruling to you, since you’ve received the right education for it. Actually, I chose to stay with the marquisate because I thought you’d be happier that way. I wanted to make the better choice for you too, I guess.”

“Fiene...”

The girl averted her gaze. “You wanted to succeed the marquisate because father took good care of you, didn’t you? That’s why you’ve worked so hard all your life. I haven’t done nearly as much, so it’s only natural for you to take the reins.”

“Right.” Baldur firmly held her hand. “Thank you, Fiene. For choosing to stay with the marquisate and accepting my proposal in the best way possible. I really appreciate it.” He spoke passionately and emotionally, as if he were praying to the gods.

Fiene drew back ever so slightly, embarrassed. She tried to squirm her hand free, but the warmth and strength of his hand weakened her will to resist. She could only give a strained smile.

“Anyway, I’ve made up my mind,” she said. “I’m gonna become a marquise! Because that way, I can stay with all the people I love—my sister, Sir Bal, mommy, father, my little sisters, and everyone at school! We can all be happy together that way. Probably! So, Sir Bal, I’m counting on you to give me guidance and stuff, since you were raised to be the next head of House Riefenstahl!”

“Yes, I’ll do everything I can to ease the burden on you. I don’t want you to regret your decision. I want you to be glad you chose this path. I’ll offer you my

love and devotion—no, everything I have—for the rest of my life.”

“Um, I don’t want to count on you *that* much...”

It wasn’t clear whether Baldur had heard Fiene’s dismayed mumbling. He continued to shower her with words of love and admiration until the beginning of the play, sounding more grandiose than the actors onstage. Fiene covered her ears, indifferent.

“Ohhh,” Lady Kobayashi said. “It’s a shame she didn’t make the decision because of her love for Bal alone, but at least it doesn’t seem like her past life’s trauma is affecting her much?”

Lieselotte sighed. “Well, now that I’ve heard about her past as Eve, I think she may unconsciously be making it look like she prioritizes me over Baldur. She may feel like something bad will happen if she openly says he’s her beloved.”

“Then...”

Perhaps it would be better to tell her it was the evil god Kuon who instilled that fear in her, and there’s no need to worry anymore now that he’s sealed away?

Before I could raise the question, Lieselotte stopped me with a very reassuring smile.

“However, Baldur is fully capable of overcoming that much, so I don’t think there’ll be any issues,” she said. “There are only two ways to make a Riefenstahl give up on their love. Either you make it clear from the very start that you think nothing of them, or you outright kill them. If you let them think they have a chance even one time, they’ll cling to hope forever, convinced they can change your mind. They’ll continue to chase you for their entire life, offering their love and begging for your affection. That’s how our family is.”

Lord Endo’s face twitched. “The Riefenstahls sure are messed up, huh...?”

In other words, Lieselotte also loves me that strongly. I couldn’t help but feel happy, although I was perhaps similar in that regard. Lieselotte wasn’t the first Riefenstahl to marry into the royal family, so it was possible I had inherited

some of their characteristics. *However, for the sake of staying on topic, I'm not going to mention it.*

"Well, at any rate, let's leave them be." I smiled. "We won't tell them about Adam and Eve yet."

Lieselotte gave a polite nod. "Yes, I think that will be fine. Now then, as for other major changes since the ball... It'd have to be Count Leon Schach."

"Oh, something happened with Professor Leon too?" Lady Kobayashi's eyes widened. "Wait, 'Count Leon Schach'?! Professor Leon inherited House Schach?! That's a humongous change!"

"Is it really such a surprise?" I asked.

"Of course! I mean, Professor Leon *hates* his family. He's so vicious towards his dad and stepmom, you'd think they were gonna kill each other. He even ignores you when you call him by the name Schach because it reminds him of his family! Immature, right? So why would he become Count Schach?!"

Lieselotte giggled. "The previous count and his wife were stripped of their nobility and imprisoned. Their designated heir, Professor Leon Schach's younger brother, is still too young, so the countship went to the closest blood relative."

"Wow..." Lady Kobayashi murmured.

It was my turn to relay what the royal family had been told. "It's only a temporary position, though. He's announced he'll be adopting his younger brother and handing over the title when the boy comes of age. He's managing the territory adequately, but he doesn't seem to be actively socializing. I'm not sure whether he's proud of being Count Schach. He still pretends he doesn't hear you if you call him by that name."

"Oh, so even with his parents gone, he still hates the family itself," Lady Kobayashi said. "Well, Professor Leon's always had a 'screw nobles' kind of attitude. Man, it's still surprising, though. In the game, his parents were total scoundrels. It didn't seem like they could be dealt with so easily."

Now I was the surprised one. "Is that so? In the past few months, numerous crimes of theirs have come to light, such as tax evasion and the importation, use, and trafficking of illegal drugs. With so much concrete evidence and

witness testimony appearing left and right, it's a wonder how they were able to get away with it for so long."

I looked to Lieselotte for agreement and she nodded, embarrassed.

"Yes, it's as Sieg says," she said. "Also, the other families in the faction they belong to aren't defending them at all. Seeing how cornered the Schachs were, as well as the crudeness of their methods, almost makes me want to pity them. However, crimes are crimes, so there isn't any room for sympathy."

"It's that bad?" Lord Endo said.

"What in the world happened?" Lady Kobayashi murmured.

The gods still had looks of disbelief on their faces.

Lord Endo furrowed his brow. "Aside from the stuff about Leon's parents, what I don't get is why he inherited the title, even if it's only temporary. In the game—well, from what Shihono said before, Leon really hates things that're annoying to deal with, doesn't he? He seems like he'd throw out the countship right away and insist it has nothing to do with him."

"Yeah," Lady Kobayashi said. "But going off of my knowledge of the game, things started being weird before that, during the battle with the witch in late fall. Remember when 'Mr. Karlchen' showed up?"

We all exchanged looks as if we were hoping someone here knew the answer to our question. The masked mage of justice, Mr. Karlchen, had clearly been Professor Leon.

Prior to the battle, the gods had said, "We want to recruit Professor Leon if we can, but it's probably impossible. Still, we *do* want his help, so let's try asking him anyway. Does anyone know if he has any weaknesses?" However, in the end, no one knew his weaknesses and we gave up.

At least, that's how it was supposed to be. For some reason, even though the gods had instructed us to forget about recruiting him, he showed up at the battle anyway.

"No one called him or anything, right?" Lord Endo asked.

I nodded firmly. I had checked with Fiene afterwards out of curiosity. She

hadn't tried to persuade him with her tears, nor had I threatened him with my royal authority.

"The Witch of Yore was darkness incarnate," I said. "Since he's well versed in black magic, could it be that he somehow sensed her presence?"

"But the witch was already on her last legs at that point," Lord Endo said, not missing a beat.

Yes, that's true. By the time Professor Leon had arrived, the Witch of Yore had already been purified by Lieselotte, leaving only tiny remnants of her malice behind. Thus, it wasn't as though he had sensed a great evil and felt obliged to do something about it.

"I hate to be rude, but Professor Leon Schach seems the type to run away as fast as he can if he senses any sign of trouble," Lieselotte said.

"I agree," Lady Kobayashi said. "He was supposed to keep hiding his true ability and avoid making waves. It's a total mystery what motivated him to come to the battle."

We all tilted our heads in thought.

"In the game, he found his resolve after falling in love with the heroine, right?" Lord Endo said. "Maybe something similar happened?"

Lady Kobayashi furrowed her brow and hummed. "Yeah, that *would* get him to join the battle. Plus, his route's Best End has him rebuilding his family's reputation—and making his brother indebted to him—until he can hand over the reins. But it should've taken a lot longer for him to reach that ending."

"Oh, I see. Well, yeah. Normally, he wouldn't be able to work up the resolve to take on that situation so quickly."

"Yep. In the game, it doesn't happen until after Fiene graduates from school. His parents are imprisoned, but the disputes with officials, servants, and other involved people keep coming, and he has to keep showing that he didn't have anything to do with his parents' crimes. It's a ton of work, and he gets a lot of negative attention from the public. He's got a tough road ahead. Plus, Fiene's with Bal, not him."

“Oh, right. And since the witch groveled on her knees without putting up a fight, the only one who got an achievement out of the battle was Saint Lieselotte.”

“Yeah, exactly. In the game’s Leon Route, Fiene becomes the nation’s Maiden of Salvation who defeated the witch, and Professor Leon’s her partner. That’s how he was able to reverse public opinion.”

“W-Wait a moment, please!” Lieselotte cut in.

I had simply been listening and acknowledging there was much I did not know. More importantly, I thought it would be rude to interrupt the gods’ conversation. Lieselotte had likely been thinking the same, but she couldn’t overlook Lady Kobayashi’s last statement.

“Huh?” Lady Kobayashi asked. “What’s wrong, Liese-tan?”

Lieselotte trembled slightly, her face pale. “The Maiden of Salvation and her partner... I-In other words, I stole the fame and honor that was supposed to go to Fiene and her beloved, did I not?”

“Nah, if the witch had revived, there might’ve been casualties,” Lord Endo said. “What you did was even better, that’s all. You didn’t steal anything. Right, Shihono?”

Lady Kobayashi nodded firmly. “That’s right, Liese-tan! Not only did you subdue the Witch of Yore, you purified her and revived the Goddess Lireнна, making you an official saint. You’re the only one who could’ve accomplished this, so you don’t need to feel guilty at all. The game’s ‘Maiden of Salvation’ title wasn’t formal or anything. It was more like a nickname. Besides, don’t you think Fiene’s already overwhelmed by what she’s got now?”

“Overwhelmed?” Lieselotte tilted her head in confusion.

Lady Kobayashi grinned. “I mean, she can hear the Voices of the Gods. That gives her a lot of influence, doesn’t it? Plus, she’s super strong, she has the crown prince and princess’s favor, and she’s engaged to a future marquis. Having a nickname like the Maiden of Salvation would just make people pay even more attention to her, so wouldn’t her life be more peaceful without it? If you offered it to her now, I bet she’d refuse.”

“Indeed... I can imagine her complaining if she were to receive such an alias. She would likely still be confused to this day.”

“Exactly,” Lord Endo said. “And if you’re concerned about her partner, Baldur, he didn’t get to become the Maiden of Salvation’s knight, but he did receive a divine blessing from me, a god from a foreign realm. Is that not enough?”

“It’s more than enough,” Lieselotte said. “A god’s divine blessing is far more significant than any single war achievement.” She seemed to have had a revelation.

Lady Kobayashi smiled at her. “Yep, so don’t worry about it. Anyway, we were talking about Professor Leon, right? What forceful means did he use to inherit the countship without the Maiden of Salvation’s power, and how did he do it *that* fast? Heck, why did he force his way there in the first place? Don’t you think it’s strange?”

“What if Leon was destined to settle things with his family eventually, even without Fiene’s involvement?” Lord Endo asked. “Or, considering how crude his parents’ methods were, maybe *they* were fated to ruin. Leon was willing to leave his comfort zone to make that happen and figured he might as well raise his younger brother properly while he was at it. Could it be something like that?”

The gods tilted their heads, unable to come up with a clear answer.

Why did he appear at the battle against the Witch of Yore, and why did he inherit the countship? Even the gods cannot say, so the truth must only be known to the man himself.

◇◇◇ Is He the Fae Princess's Friend, Replacement, Disciple, Or...?

It was the night of the final day of the Festival of Gratitude.

Two shadowy figures were sneaking through the forest surrounding the academy's yard, where the decisive battle was to take place. Eventually, when they were a fair distance from where the Witch of Yore was expected to appear, the lankier one of the two stopped. The smaller figure—Elizabeth—stopped as well and tilted her head in confusion.

"The gods or whatever called on me, right?" the lanky figure—Leon—said flatly. "So I'm going on my own, master. You stay here and secure my escape route."

Elizabeth had already been planning on heading to the battlefield with Leon when she initially requested him to go. She couldn't hide her dismay at being blocked at the last second.

"Wh-Why? I know I wasn't called on, but Fiene—my *daughter*—is there. I want to fight too."

"I'm capable of doing everything you are, so don't worry. I'll protect your daughter...and my other students too. I'm more concerned about being able to guarantee my exit from the yard. I'd appreciate it if you would help me with that. Please stay here and conserve enough strength for it." Leon's words were dignified and resolute.

Elizabeth hung her head. "I know you surpassed me a long time ago. I'm just a worse version of you now. But still..."

"I want to show off to the Fae Princess, my first love," Leon muttered with a sad expression, seemingly unintentionally.

"First...love?"

With a beautiful smile he had learned from Elizabeth, Leon leaned closer to

her and whispered, “Yes. You were my first love, Fae Princess. The crackers you gave me that day were the most delicious food I’d ever eaten in my life. You also taught me hope and a way to live. How could I not fall in love?”

“Wait, but that isn’t relevant right now, is it?”

Elizabeth took a cautious step back, but Leon took a step forward, closing the distance. He had the longer stride, so they were now close enough to feel each other’s breaths.

“It *is* relevant,” he said. “I’m only joining this battle because it was a request from my first love. And since you’re my first love, I want to do this on my own so *you* can see what I can do. Since you’re my first love...I want you to wait somewhere safe.”

“I-I think you’re saying ‘first love’ too much! For the record, I’ll never love anyone in a romantic sense besides August!”

Leon quickly pulled away. He chuckled and nodded. “Yes, I’m well aware. Don’t be a narcissist, master. I only said you *were* my first love. This was like fifteen years ago.”

Since he didn’t say he was still in love with her now, she couldn’t reject him. He wasn’t seeking a relationship, so there was no way to deny him. Realizing this was indeed the case, Elizabeth heaved a sigh.

“I *guess*, but... Ugh, fine. I’ll wait here and let you do the fighting. I surrender, so will you quit it with the crass teasing?”

“Oh, already? What a shame. I’ll be off, then.” Leon chuckled and turned around.

Watching her disciple head to battle alone, the master shouted, “I’m not just worried about Fiene. I’m worried about you too, Leon! Don’t just protect Fiene and her friends—make sure you don’t get hurt either! I only backed down because I have faith you can do that! Don’t disappoint your master!”

“I can’t win against you,” Leon muttered very, very softly. His words hardly left his mouth, let alone reached Elizabeth. He waved his hand lightly in acknowledgment, keeping his back to her so she wouldn’t notice his cheeks were much redder than hers had been a minute ago. He wanted to hide that

fact so badly, he succeeded in using teleportation magic for the first time.

In the end, the battle began and ended with the Witch of Yore—rather, Lireнна the Goddess of Creation—on her knees, begging for mercy. Leon was so mortified he made Fiene report back to Elizabeth in his stead and fled the scene. His new spell came in very handy for that.

A few days after the Festival of Gratitude, the Goddess Lireнна reported that the evil god Kuon had been sealed away.

Another month passed. Leon was heading to the secret room in the academy he had inherited from his master. He made his way through the numerous traps as usual, avoiding them, suppressing them, and at times disabling them temporarily...or at least, he tried to.

“The traps are gone? How could this be?!”

The realization made him uncharacteristically flustered. He ran towards the room, fearing for the collection he had inherited from Elizabeth. It would be extremely bad if anyone were to see the materials relating to forbidden curses, hence why they were hidden behind layers upon layers of security.

The location was undetectable unless you already knew it was there. The path would only open if you followed the correct steps. The traps could only be removed by him or someone equally versed in black magic. The barrier could only be crossed by authorized persons, namely him and his master. Thus, no one besides him should have been able to enter this hidden room!

“Heya, Leon!” Elizabeth was lounging on the sofa without a care in the world. “I was waiting for you.”

Leon sank to his knees, partly out of relief that the intruder was none other than his master, and partly out of frustration that he had rushed at full speed for no reason.

“What are you doing?!” His voice trembled with anger as he pounded the floor with his clenched fist. “Seriously, why are you here, master?!”

“Hmm? Like I said, I was waiting for you. I wanted to talk to you about the Festival of Gratitude, so I snuck in here and was reading until you showed up.

Oh, are you wondering about the traps? I got caught last time, but I wasn't about to keep losing to my own disciple. I tried pretty hard this time!"

"It bothers me a lot that you were able to disable everything just by trying hard..."

"Really? I'm familiar with black magic, though. Plus, they were the same traps I got caught in last time. An ordinary person coming across them for the first time would probably just die."

Leon heaved a long, long sigh, as if expelling all of the anger and exhaustion that had built up in his gut. Finally calming down, he slowly stood up and stared straight at his master. "Next time, I'll set up a trap that will kill even *you*. Something that will make the room erupt in flames, taking the intruder down with it. I've realized it would be better to burn everything down than to let anyone else know what's inside. So whenever you need to come to this room, let me know in advance."

Elizabeth tried her best to laugh cheerfully, though she couldn't keep her face from twitching. "A-Aha ha ha! Oh dear, my disciple has such dangerous ideas. Wait...are you serious? Can you even *do* that? This place is still barely within the school grounds. Are you saying you can get past all of their security? If you could do that, you could kill anyone at school you wanted. Wouldn't that make you more than just a genius? I had a feeling you were strong when the gods called on you, but aren't you *too* strong?"

"The academy has changed from when you attended. The security system went down just the other day. We'd intentionally loosened it in preparation for the battle against the Witch of Yore, but it seems she'd already broken part of it a long time ago so she could lurk in the academy and conduct various schemes. It was fixed, but since the faculty was involved in the restoration, I think I could bypass it."

Elizabeth clapped her hands together. "Ohhh, so that's why the school went on break for a while after the battle. I did think it was an awfully long time. Oh, did you know? My Fiene got engaged to Baldur during that break!"

"I know. Lucky them, enjoying romance while the teachers were running around trying to fix that mess." Leon sneered, cynical.

Elizabeth laughed and patted her disciple on the shoulder. “Sorry! But you know, if you make the traps any tougher than this, I definitely won’t be able to get past them. You’re so talented, Leon.” Her expression changed to a wistful frown.

Now it was Leon’s turn to smile. “Thank you. I have my master’s teachings to thank for that.”

“Oh, don’t lie. It has nothing to do with me. I barely taught you anything about magic. The only thing you can claim to have learned directly from me is the trick to making a fake smile. I mean, I’m the kind of person who turned to curses because I wasn’t good enough at normal magic. You probably already had talent from the start, so when you added curses on top of that, you...basically lost your humanity.” Elizabeth had a distant look in her eyes.

“If that’s what you think, don’t try to get past my traps just because you don’t want to lose to me. What would you have done if they had been different from last time? In fact, I only came here today because I was going to reinforce this place’s defenses. Master, if you’d come tomorrow, you would’ve died. From now on, make sure you contact me in advance. If your business is with me and not this room, we can meet somewhere else.”

“Whoa... All right, I’ll stop trying to break through your traps, and I won’t ever try to sneak in here again. But there isn’t exactly anywhere else we can meet in person... Oh, what about a parent-teacher interview? Are Fiene’s grades bad enough that her mom needs to be called in?”

“No. So long as she has the excellent student, Lieselotte Riefenstahl, helping her, her graduation is all but assured.” Leon gave a polite, teacherly smile.

Elizabeth grinned knowingly. “In other words, if Lieselotte abandons her or she slacks off, she might not graduate. I understand. I’ll tell her to work harder.”

The smiling master and disciple averted their gazes from each other at almost the same time and slumped their shoulders.

Elizabeth tilted her head. “But unless it’s in the context of parent and teacher, we’d attract a lot of attention if I met you in public or wrote you letters, wouldn’t we? Not only am I the former Fae Princess, I’m a widow. Who knows what rumors would start? Are you sure you’re all right with that? You don’t

want to stand out, do you?”

“It’s fine. You can write letters or whatever you want. I’m about ready to give up on lying low.”

Elizabeth’s eyes widened in shock. “Huh? Why? S-Sorry, is it because of what happened during the Festival of Gratitude, when you fought the Witch of Yore? Did Count Schach find out you were such a skilled mage that even the gods would enlist your help? I knew I should’ve gone instead of you...”

“That’s not it, master. Please calm down. Neither my father nor my stepmother have sent any assassins after me or anything, so they don’t know. Well, I *was* worried that might’ve been the case today. *Someone* broke into the place I wanted to keep hidden the most, disabling all of my traps as they went. I thought my father had sent a thief to find my weaknesses so he could take advantage of me, or my mother had sent an assassin to kill me.” Leon smiled, but the depths of his eyes were cold, and his words were tinged with obvious venom.

Elizabeth lowered her head, feeling awkward. “I... Sorry. I really do feel bad. I’ll never do it again. I promise. I wouldn’t be able to, anyway.”

Leon sighed. “It’s fine. Either way, I’ve gotten tired of worrying about that kind of thing all the time. I’m going to do something about that family.”

“*Can* you do anything about them?”

“I can. If I don’t, I won’t even be able to see the woman I fell in love with in public, let alone court her. It’s about time I got serious.”

“I’ll help too... All right, that’s kind of awkward to say. I feel like if you get serious, I’ll be the one with a problem in the end. Is it vain of me to think that?”

“Who knows? Well, I don’t want the woman I fell in love with to think I’m always relying on others, so I’m going to declare right now that I have no intention of accepting any help from you regarding this.”

“O-Oh... Wait, but I think I’m still ahead of you when it comes to connections...”

Leon beamed. “Master. This academy is attended by nobility from all over,

and sometimes even royalty.”

“Yes, and...?”

“However, the students here are still immature and make mistakes. They’re all adolescents, so love-related quarrels happen rather often.”

“I imagine so, yes.”

“And *I’m* a professor here that uses black magic. In your words, I’m at the level where I’ve ‘lost’ my ‘humanity.’”

“Yes, that’s right. Wait, don’t tell me...”

“Black magic is convenient, isn’t it? You can use it to erase various traces, corrupt people’s minds, and search people’s memories and tamper with them.”

“So that’s what you were getting at...”

Leon simply smiled.

Elizabeth nodded. It all made sense to her now. “I see... The connections you can gain that way are hard to beat, even for the Fae Princess. They’re just so different in severity, although I don’t know whether they’re based on huge favors or fatal weaknesses. You’ve grown so much, Leon!” She laughed, admitting her loss.

Her disciple laughed too, sincerely happy.

Interlude

It was the afternoon of my wedding day. Now that it was spring, the events of last autumn felt nostalgic. A refreshing breeze blew through the castle garden.

In the end, we knew nothing about why Professor Leon had appeared at the ball as Mr. Karlchen. All we could do was tilt our heads in puzzlement.

Lieselotte clapped her hands together. “Come to think of it, Count Leon Schach visits House Riefenstahl occasionally, though I’ve never seen him at any parties. Apparently, he was one of the Fae Princess’s followers. He comes to see my mother’s paintings and...forgive my phrasing, but he appears to be paying tribute to Lady Elizabeth.”

Lady Kobayashi laughed cheerfully. “Ooh, so he’s a fanboy! Well then, it sounds like he’s enjoying his life!”

“Yeah,” Lord Endo said. “I don’t really get it, but he doesn’t have to deal with his cruel family anymore, right? Good for him! Congrats!”

It seemed like we were ready to move on to the next topic, so I brought up something that had been on my mind for a long time. “Come to think of it, Aoto and Kobayashi visited Miss Fiene in the winter, didn’t they?”

“How did you know— Oh.” Lady Kobayashi covered her mouth, realizing she’d inadvertently answered my question. I didn’t think it was anything to be ashamed of, though.

I smiled. “Miss Fiene informed me right after winter break. She said she would feel less guilty if she told me the truth.”

“S-Sorry, Sieg,” Lady Kobayashi said. “I did notice you weren’t around, but it really was a coincidence that the pathway opened at all. Both of the people we’d given our blessing to were with Fiene at the time, so we could only get that perspective.”

“Yeah, it wasn’t on purpose,” Lord Endo said. “Sorry, though. It’s just that, by that point, Lirennia had already promised she’d take us to your wedding, so we

figured we'd be able to see you later anyway."

"We didn't mean to ignore you! Well, it's true we didn't make an effort to see you or even pass a message along. It's understandable if you're mad at us."

I couldn't help but chuckle. "All of those excuses make it sound like you've done something to be guilty about. I know it wasn't on purpose, so I'm not angry at you."

"Okay, maybe not angry, but weren't you upset?" Lady Kobayashi asked. "Or like—"

"Oh, speaking of winter break," Lord Endo said. "Remember the day it snowed at the Riefenstahl estate? I was surprised to see how Fabian and Cecilie turned out."

Was the drastic change of subject his way of stopping Lady Kobayashi from unwittingly pointing out the truth, or was it his way of helping me save face?

"Oh, yeah, Cechy-tan sure was strong!" Lady Kobayashi laughed.

Cecilie's older sister, Lieselotte, gave an embarrassed sigh. "I'm so ashamed. That girl seems to have developed the Riefenstahl mentality in a strange way... Well, before she met Fabian, she was always absentminded and apathetic towards everything, so I suppose it's a good thing she's now willing to do anything for him."

"Fabian is an easy target for kidnappings, so it takes a certain amount of skill and resolve to stay with him," I said. "I'm glad he has a girl with that much passion by his side."

No matter how many years go by, she'll never let go of Fabian. That means I won't have to worry about Lieselotte. She cares about her family, so she wouldn't get involved with someone her sister loves so dearly.

I kept my narrow-minded true feelings sealed deep within my heart.

"That is very true," Lieselotte said. "I imagine I'll have to warn her not to make Fabian uncomfortable, but I do think it's good they met each other."

My wife responded positively, but Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi were giving me disapproving looks.

I'm aware of my own narrow-mindedness, so please don't stare at me like that.

I cleared my throat in an attempt to shake off their gazes. "Well then, while we're on the topic of those two, shall we discuss everything that happened between the royal castle's Festival of Gratitude celebration and today?"

◆◆◆ The Events Leading Up to the Wedding

Semester 2, December: The Stars in the Night Sky

About a month had passed since the late autumn Festival of Gratitude. The real cold had set in, and a certain event was being held at the academy: the Starlight Festival, a night where we gazed at the stars in the clear winter sky.

Since it was so chilly, there were a number of bonfires set up in the middle of the yard where the students could keep warm. However, I didn't quite feel like joining the crowd in their lively conversation. Instead, I went behind the school, where no one else was around. I sat on a bench and thought about the gods from a distant realm, Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi, as I gazed at the twinkling stars.

The stars were supposed to be beautiful tonight. Yet, for some reason, they didn't move my heart. I found myself spacing out.

"So this is where you were, Your Highness."

The sudden voice made my shoulders flinch in surprise. I hurriedly looked in its direction and saw my fiancée, Lieselotte.

"Ah...if I stay there, everyone will try to accommodate me," I said, managing to scrounge up an excuse. It wasn't a lie, but it wasn't the entire reason.

Lieselotte didn't seem to notice how I awkwardly averted my gaze. She sat next to me, unconcerned. "Still, I do not think it is wise to come to such a place alone. It would be better if you at least had me with you at all times."

Her expression was pointed and indifferent, but I couldn't help but chuckle at how adorable her words were. In the past, she wouldn't have voiced that second sentence aloud. Rather, before she would've even had a chance to state her true feelings, I would have apologized and things would've become awkward. Had this conversation been before last spring, I'm sure it would've gone that way. However, the two voices who had been supporting me from

spring to late fall had guided our relationship to the wonderful state it was in now.

But now, they're...

"There's a lonely feeling in the air," Lieselotte said.

I flinched. She had seen right through me.

Either she didn't notice me shrink back, or she was pretending to be unaware. I couldn't tell, because she simply looked up at the stars and continued to speak.

"The winter air is clear and refreshing, but there aren't many signs of flora and fauna at this time of year, so it feels lonely."

Oh, she didn't realize I was lonely because I missed the gods. I secretly let out a sigh of relief.

Lieselotte glanced at me and tilted her head. "Do you not think so, Your Highness?"

"Oh, yes. It does...feel lonely." It was hard to get the words out. Denying it would've been strange, but I didn't like how they touched upon my true feelings.

"You finally said it aloud." Lieselotte smiled.

I stiffened. *Just how good of a mind reader is she?*

"It's good to put your feelings into words every now and then," she said gently. "If you keep them bottled up, they stagnate, strain, and distort... By the time you notice, you might not be able to do anything about it anymore. Just look at me. I was nearly possessed by the Witch of Yore." She giggled.

Her sincerity and concern moved me. I had to hold back the urge to cry.

She did realize I missed my friends, but she also knew I couldn't say it, so she gave me another way to say the words corresponding to my innermost feelings.

Lieselotte sighed. "You and I—no, all children born to royalty and nobility are taught to not show our emotions openly, to hide our inner turmoil, and to smile gracefully at all times. When it comes to our duties, this is the right thing to do,

because in noble society, if one reveals their weakness, they will be kicked down.” She looked straight at me. “However, I believe family falls outside of that principle, as do soon-to-be-family relationships like ours. I feel that if we apply that principle to family, it will suffocate us and cause relationships to collapse.”

I wonder if that’s true. Oh, but it certainly could’ve been the reason our relationship was on the verge of collapse until last spring. It improved considerably after her lovely inner thoughts were revealed to me.

Lieselotte smiled softly, perhaps sensing that she had convinced me. “In times of hardship, let us share the burden, and in times of happiness, let us rejoice together. Let us express our inner thoughts and tell each other how we truly feel. I’m sure that is what we were missing until last spring.”

“I...feel lonely, Liese. I’ve lost my connection to my dear friends, and I miss them. I loved and respected them. I was so grateful to them, and I wanted to be with them forever and ever.”

“It’s incredibly fortunate that you were able to make such good friends. They must have been wonderful people.”

I nodded, encouraged by her calm voice. “Yes. They were thoughtful, knowledgeable, kindhearted, and brave. Oh, and they expressed their emotions with all their heart. They cheered with joy at our happiness, cried with grief at our misfortune, yelled with fury at our enemies...”

Oh no. Talking about my friends, whose voices I haven’t heard for a month now, is giving me the urge to cry.

If I were to follow Lieselotte’s advice, I wouldn’t need to hold back my tears. However, part of me was still stubbornly resisting. I looked up at the stars, trying not to let my tears spill.

“Yes, it was as if they were illustrating the feelings I couldn’t express myself,” I said. “It must’ve prevented me from bottling them up. That’s another way they helped me, huh?” I could hear the shakiness in my voice. I took a slow, deep breath to calm myself. “I know I have to get used to not having their voices around. I have to be able to get by without them. Yet I still can’t help but feel lonely.”

“It’s only natural,” Lieselotte said. “That’s how important they were to you. It’s sad they’re gone, isn’t it?”

Her gentle voice broke my resistance. *I hope the darkness of night will conceal the unstoppable flow of tears running down my cheeks*, I prayed as I looked down and away from the too-bright moon and stars.

“Let me tell you about the Witch of Yore’s tactics,” Lieselotte said.

Huh? What is she talking about all of a sudden?

“She starts by saying words that address her target’s feelings, then quickly follows with words that lead in a different direction, pulling the target’s mind that way. I was suffering because I couldn’t obtain your love, and she linked that to a grudge towards Fiene. In the end, I was almost convinced the entire world was my enemy.”

“L-Liese...” I looked up without thinking.

Lieselotte shook her head nonchalantly. “Don’t worry. I know now I was mistaken about being unable to obtain your love. This is simply a declaration that I will copy this trick I nearly fell for.”

“Copy? What do you mean?” I tilted my head.

She smiled. “Prince Siegwald, you feel unbearably lonely because you cannot see your friends, do you not? And that means you are looking forward to reuniting with them very much.”

“Yes...I suppose. If the opportunity ever arose...”

“It will! However, only if you *believe* it will, Sieg! You are excited to see your friends again. What will you talk about when you next meet?”

So she’s trying to address my loneliness and lead it towards excitement. I never even considered what I would do the next time I met my friends...

I tried to think about it. “Let’s see... I wasn’t allowed to ask them questions, so I suppose I’d like to hear various things about them.”

“Oh, that sounds nice. What would you ask?”

“It felt like they had grown closer, so I was wondering if they’d gotten

engaged.”

“That is indeed a topic of interest. Is there anything else?”

“The world they live in— Well, no, that doesn’t matter. It’s just that, if I’m allowed to think of them as friends, I’d like to hear about ordinary things such as their likes, dislikes... Actually, no, I suppose the subject of the conversation really doesn’t matter. I simply wish to be able to chat with them. That alone would bring me joy and excitement.”

“Those are words one would say to the person they love,” Lieselotte said, pouting.

I couldn’t help but chuckle at her adorable jealousy. She really was endearing.

Oh, I know. Lady Kobayashi seemed very fond of Lieselotte, so we can talk about how cute she is. That would be...

“Yes, I’m looking forward to it very much.” I truly meant those words.

“I am as well,” Lieselotte said.

That’s right. I’m lonely, but I’m also excited. We did promise we’d see each other again, so I ought to look forward to our reunion. My beloved will be with me throughout this lonely time, and we’ll await the moment of happiness together.

“Thank you, Liese.”

“You’re very welcome.” She smiled warmly at me, as if matching the newfound warmth in my heart.

We gazed up at the stars, and it was the most beautiful night I had ever experienced.

December, Winter Break: The Riefenstahl Way

The academy’s winter break was about a week long. Fiene returned to the Riefenstahl castle with Baldur, Lieselotte, Cecilie—the youngest daughter of House Riefenstahl—and Cecilie’s fiancé, Fabian. It snowed heavily that night.

Early the next morning, the castle was unusually noisy.

“Hey, I think your skills dulled while you were busy with the wedding preparations, Lieselotte,” Baldur said. “How can you say you’ll protect His Highness for the rest of your life when *that’s* the best you can do?”

“Oh my, Baldur. You didn’t notice I was being considerate? You may be in training, but you’re still a royal knight. I wouldn’t want to embarrass you with a quick defeat. I’m going to get a little more serious now!”

“Hah, I don’t need you to go easy on me. Come at me with all you’ve got!”

“Sir Bal, Lieselotte!” Fiene shouted. “Don’t get too reckless just because I’m here to heal you, okay?! Ugh, it’s no use. They aren’t listening to me.”

In the center of the training ground behind the castle, Baldur and Lieselotte were glaring at and taunting each other. Fiene’s request went completely ignored amidst the fierce clash between spear and sword.



“W-Well, Lieselotte’s wedding ceremony had to be pushed forward because of the goddess’s sudden revival, so she’s been busy lately,” Fiene said. “The royal palace may be huge, but it’s still in the city, so she can’t make much noise there. She’s finally getting a break and a chance to relieve stress, so Sir Bal’s doing his best to help her...I guess?”

She tried to make sense of the fierce battle playing out before her eyes.

“Yep, Lieselotte looks like she’s having a ton of fun! So it’s fine...or maybe it’s not. She insists any injuries can be healed, but I don’t know if she should be going berserk like that when she’s going to be crown princess soon. Or maybe the point *is* to get it out of the way before becoming crown princess? Actually, now I feel like the *real* issue is that Prince Siegwald doesn’t get to see how much fun Lieselotte’s having. He can be surprisingly narrow-minded...”

Lieselotte and Baldur’s duel intensified.

“Oh. They started using magic. Well, that’s dangerous. Then again, they were fighting seriously from the start, so it wasn’t safe to begin with. I’m sure they know each other’s strength, and they aren’t the type to be *too* careless...but if something *really* bad happens, will I be able to handle it by myself?”

Fiene clapped her hands, realizing something.

“Wait, can’t they just do this at the royal palace, where there are a lot of people who are good at healing magic? It also has a bigger yard than the Riefenstahl branch family’s estate, and they could always just blame the noise on the knights. That way, Prince Siegwald could watch too. Well, I guess Lieselotte doesn’t want him to see her like this...”

After all that grumbling, a gentle smile came to her face.

“But if he were to see her so lively and gorgeous, I’m sure he’d fall in love with her all over again. Ahhh, she really is gallant. I wish I could fight beautifully like her...”

Fiene sighed dreamily and nodded as she watched Lieselotte.

“I really think His Highness should see her fierce and beautiful fighting style. It’s too bad he can’t join us this time because he has to prepare for graduation

and his upcoming royal duties while also coordinating a last-minute wedding. Maybe I should ask father if Lieselotte can join the knights' training drills at the palace sometime? His Highness is probably sulking because he can't see her."

Having come to a conclusion, Fiene finally took her eyes off the two cousins, who were now hitting each other with the strongest spells they had. She looked to the other side of the training ground, where the kids were gathered around the fresh snow.

"We're going to build a snowman. That's what Fabian said, so that's that."

"Cecilie, I get that the guest's opinion is important, but with this many people, we could set our sights a lot higher. If we're going to make something, it should at least be a snow hut."

"Wait, Katrina. Can't we get Fabian to bring all the snow together into a mountain with his magic? Then we can go sledding or skiing."

"You're a genius, Adelina! We can even take it from the front of the castle, and that'll take care of the snow removal!"

"Right?"

"Adelina, Katrina, don't try to take advantage of Fabian," Cecilie said. "He's not like the savages of House Riefenstahl. He's a real prodigy and he's going to create a work of art. If you cause a ruckus, I'll kill you."

"No, um, I'm fine with anything..." Fabian said.

"Whoa, did you just say you'd kill us?" Katrina winced. "Who's the real savage here, Cechy?"

Cecilie glared at her. "Don't call me Cechy. My name is *Cecilie*!"

"Calm down, Cechy," Adelina said. "It's not that big of a deal."

"If it's a fight you want, bring it on," Cecilie said in a low voice.

The twins snickered.

"Hey, Katrina, don't you think our baby sister, who was calling herself 'Cechy' until recently because she couldn't pronounce her own name properly, is awfully cheeky now that she has a fiancé?"

“Why yes, Adelina. The lazy and spoiled Cecilie, who always runs away from training and studying sessions to take afternoon naps, has been trying to show off in front of her crush, huh?”

Cecilie glared at her sisters. “As Riefenstahls, it’s in our nature to change when we’ve decided who to protect. I’m not Cechy anymore. I became a knight-in-training before either of you, with the approval of father and His Majesty, and I’m even going to the royal capital. Isn’t it disgraceful to keep bringing up the past just because you could only win against me back then?”

“Excuse me?” Adelina said. “Don’t you think you’re getting too carried away? Oh, did you forget how strong the Riefenstahls are while you were playing with the scrubs in the capital?”

“Maybe playing pretend knight in a casual environment with barely any monsters made her think she was especially strong,” Katrina said. “I think it’s time for her mighty sisters to put her in her place.”

The twins returned Cecilie’s glare with icy ones of their own. The mana being channeled by the three sisters collided midair in a flurry of sparks.

“Yikes, them too?” Fiene gave a stiff smile. “The Riefenstahls sure are hot-blooded. Then again, maybe this is a military family’s way of communication? They let their fists do the talking, and the more they fight, the better they get along. They seem to be enjoying themselves, but it’s scary to watch. I really don’t like it.”

“Let’s have a snowball fight!” Fabian ran between the three girls. “We shouldn’t use magic against each other. If you want to fight, let’s use the snow to settle it. We can do it tournament-style, with me and Ceci versus Miss Adelina and Miss Katrina. Um, I think the court is supposed to look something like this? Oh, and we need flags, don’t we?”

As he waved his wand, the snow danced in the air and changed color, quickly shaping itself into a symmetrical court with a centerline, back lines, end lines, and several scattered shelters. Cecilie grinned proudly, while Adelina and Katrina looked on in awe.

The moment he finished, Cecilie applauded. “You really are a genius, Fabian. Not only are you blessed with a vast mana pool, you also have exquisite control

over it. I love you so much.”

“Th-Thanks, Ceci. It wasn’t that big of a deal, though.”

“Only a true genius would be able to say it wasn’t a big deal. Marry me, Fabian.”

“Yes, let’s get married one day. We’re already formally engaged through our families, so it’d actually be a problem if you *didn’t* marry me.”

“All right, enough with the flirting, you two,” Adelina said.

“We found some flags over there,” Katrina said. “Will these work?”

The twins were holding red and blue flags they had apparently found in the equipment storeroom.

“Oh, they’re perfect!” Fabian took them. “Thank you.” He passed by Cecilie—who was sulking since they’d been interrupted—and put the finishing touches on the court with his magic. “Umm, this goes here, that goes there... I think that should be it? Since I made the field, you two can decide which side you want. I did try to make them the same, though.”

“I’m fine with either,” Adelina said. “Which should we choose, Katrina?”

“Hmm, let’s go with red!” Katrina said.

“We’ll be blue, then.” Cecilie giggled. “Fabian and I both have blue eyes. I like that. I’ll protect our flag to the bitter end!”

“Ceci, regardless of whether we win or lose, I’m going to clear out the snow for the sake of helping the staff,” Fabian said. “I’ll make the mountain, and we can build the snowman afterwards.”

“Yes, I’m going to protect you to the bitter end too, Fabian!”

“As usual, she isn’t listening.” Fabian gave a strained laugh. “Ceci always loses her composure all of a sudden when it comes to me, huh?” He turned to Adelina and Katrina and smiled. “Ceci seems to be all fired up, but I just want to have fun, so let’s get along, all right? No offensive magic allowed in this snowball fight.”

“What?!”

“But then we won’t be able to beat Cecilie up!”

Fabian grinned even wider. “Please don’t try to beat up my cute fiancée. Just so you know, if offensive magic were allowed, I’d be able to bury this whole area under an avalanche. You two would be killed in an instant.”

“Ahhh, Fabian, you’re sooo cool!” Cecilie squealed. “I love you! Marry me right this instant!”

“I appreciate your feelings, but I don’t think we legally *can* right now...”

The twins were not impressed.

“This is kind of annoying, Adelina.”

“Yes, Katrina. Fabian’s almost as much of a brat as Cechy.”

“We’ll just have to beat him so badly, he’ll regret giving us a handicap.”

“Exactly. He thinks too lowly of us. Banning offensive magic means physical buffs are fair game, right?”

Cecilie smirked. “Heh, you’re the ones who shouldn’t be underestimating Fabian. My beloved husband is strong even when he’s on the defense.”

Fabian forced a smile. “We aren’t married yet, Ceci. Hmm, but you’re right. I bet I could even kill them with a barrier. I should put my wand away, then. Oh, Miss Fiene, could you hold my wand?”

“*What?!* This cheeky brat! You think you can fight us without a wand? Katrina, we’re taking them down!”

“Yes, Adelina, let’s give them a *thorough* beating! Their carelessness will be their death!”

“Aha ha, even without a wand, I can share my mana with Ceci by touching her!” Fabian said.

“Even if you don’t do anything, your mere presence makes me invincible,” Cecilie said. “I will protect you no matter what. This is my lifelong vow!”

The four kids scattered around the court, leaving a bewildered Fiene with Fabian’s wand.

“Oooh...wow. Fabby-boo left his wand behind to go play!”

Fiene stiffened upon hearing the voice of Shihono Kobayashi, a goddess from a foreign realm. “Uh, what?! It’s been ages since I last heard you! Wait, why are you here? Oh, is it because Lieselotte and Sir Bal are here?! Oh no, but His Highness is stuck elsewhere! He’s going to be so upset if he finds out about this!”

This was even worse than Siegwald missing out on Lieselotte’s beauty in combat. The Voices of the Gods hadn’t been heard for quite some time since the revival of the Goddess Lirennia and the sealing of the evil god Kuon in late autumn. Siegwald, who had known them longer than Fiene had, missed them so much that he would look up at the sky and pray for them every day.

Their sudden return threw Fiene into a panic, but Aoto and Shihono themselves continued to speak casually, the way they always had, as if nothing were out of the ordinary.

“Is Fabian’s wand that bow-like thing Fiene’s holding?” Aoto asked.

“Yep, it’s got a bit of a weird shape,” Shihono said. **“It’s partly because a wand that can handle Fabby-boo’s firepower *has* to be that big. Oh, and you know how he’s a prime target for kidnappers? That’s why his wand was made to look like a bow—people will be intimidated if he’s clearly armed with a weapon.”**

“Huh, I didn’t know that,” Fiene said, impressed. She glanced at the wand in her hands.

“Not only is it a valuable weapon that can bring out his full potential, the kidnappings went down in frequency a lot after he started carrying it around, so he thinks of it as a protective charm,” Shihono said. **“From what the game showed, he never ever sets it aside in front of someone he’s wary of. In fact, he holds it firmly so he’s ready to shoot a flaming arrow at any time. Letting go of it means he must feel really secure here.”**

“Didn’t he take his hands off his bow the very first time he talked to Lieselotte?”

“That was a special exception. In the game, he doesn’t do it until the end, when you’ve raised his affection a lot. Even then, he keeps it within reach. Basically, Fabby-boo thinks this is the safest place he can be!”

Fiene mulled over Shihono's words. First of all, House Riefenstahl was a protector of the country, and this castle of theirs was well guarded. On top of that, the people present included Lieselotte, who doted on him, and his fiancée Cecilie, who boasted about protecting him for the rest of her life. He wasn't on close terms with Adelina and Katrina yet, but he wasn't scared of or uncomfortable around them either. As for Fiene herself, they were comrades-in-arms who had "defeated" the witch together. Thinking about it, he'd been speaking to her without his wand in hand ever since that fateful day, and they had gradually stopped using formalities with each other.

For Fabian, this must've been a place where he could let go of his protective charm and play freely like any other kid his age.

"Wait, I'm missing someone, aren't I?" Fiene said.

The moment the words left her mouth, the person in question approached her from behind.

"Oh, a snowball fight, huh?" Baldur said.

"That looks like fun," Lieselotte said.

The cousins, who had been fighting to the death under the guise of training, shockingly appeared to be unharmed.

Cecilie, Adelina, and Katrina, who had been hurling snowballs at each other with such force it was impossible to judge who was winning or losing, suddenly jumped out of the court to block Baldur's way.

"Bal, don't get close to Fabian!"

"Hey, Bal, crouch down before you come here!"

"You *know* Fabian's uncomfortable with tall men!"

The trauma from all of the repeated kidnappings had left Fabian with a fear of tall men, and his emotional support—his wand—was currently in Fiene's care. Even if Baldur wasn't approaching with malicious intent, his strong physique made him exactly the kind of person that made Fabian uncomfortable.

Fiene turned pale at the thought of how terrified the boy must be. She ran up to him with the wand. "Fabian, you can have this back!"

“No, it’s fine,” Fabian said. “Hold on to it until the snowball fight is over, Miss Fiene. Bal—er, *Sir* Baldur...is like a brother to Ceci, so I’m...not scared.”

The boy’s reserved smile made Fiene, Cecilie, Adelina, Katrina, and Baldur—who had gone stiff upon realizing he’d done something wrong—all breathe a sigh of relief.

“Thanks for trying to protect me, Ceci, Adelina, Katrina, and Miss Fiene. It’s because you’re all here that I’m fine without my wand.”

“Oh, Fabian, you’re growing up by the day,” Cecilie gushed. “I’ll have to work hard to keep up with you!”

The boy gave a strained smile and tilted his head. “Hmm, am I? I hope so. I know Baldur isn’t scary, but when I’m faced with someone as big and strong as him, I can’t help but feel small and powerless. My body starts shaking on its own...” He shook his head and put on a stern expression. “But that’s right—I’m growing up every day! One day, I’ll be even bigger than Baldur, and nothing will scare me anymore. I’ll become your ideal husband, the strongest in the world. Will you marry me then, Ceci?”

“I want to right now! Literally, right now! Oh, I love you so much, I already want to live with you forever. I don’t want to be apart from you for even a day!”

“Hmm, it’s not possible right now. I’m sorry, okay?” Fabian patted Cecilie on the head.

“It’s fine.” The girl regained her composure. “If that’s what you say, I can wait. I *will* wait. I also have to do my best to become worthy of the strongest husband in the world.”

“They *really* are getting on my nerves,” Adelina said. “I’m going to beat them up, Katrina.”

“After all that, they’re back to flirting,” Katrina said. “Let’s beat them up together, Adelina.”

The twins dashed back to their positions on the court.

“Hm, so the game’s back on,” Baldur said. “I’ll join Addy and Katty’s side, then. You don’t need to hold back, Fabian. See if you can defeat someone who

makes you uncomfortable.” He grinned boldly.

Lieselotte gave him an even more confident smile. “I’ll go with Cecilie and Fabian, then. Prepare yourself. You may have the size advantage, but I’ll show you it’s not enough to win.”

The two went to their declared sides. Cecilie and Fabian looked at each other, giggled, and returned to the court, where Lieselotte was waiting.

“Leave this to me, Fabian,” Cecilie said. “Bal’s tall, but that means his guard is weak down below. If I break one of his knees or shins, he won’t be scary anymore. I’ll do it—I’ll defeat all of your enemies.”

“I appreciate the thought, Ceci, but don’t break anything. This is just a game. Well, I do think it’d be more fun to go all out...”

Fiene nodded in agreement.

“Fiene should be able to heal a broken kneecap with ease, right?” Aoto asked.

“I think it’d be better to practice breaking bones now rather than be too scared to do it when a real enemy shows up,” Shihono said. **“Getting targeted by kidnappers is basically a regular occurrence for Fabby-boo, after all.”**

“I see...” Fiene nodded again. She faced the court, where the two teams were having strategy meetings. “Um, if you break any bones, I’ll be able to heal them, so don’t hold back, everyone! I’ll be on standby right here.”

The Riefenstahls’ eyes suddenly took on a different color. Fabian, the outlier, was confused by the sudden bloodlust he was sensing from everyone else on the court.

Fiene smiled at the boy. “Fabian, I’m short too, so I know how it feels to be intimidated by big people. But that’s exactly why you should borrow Sir Bal, watch how Cecilie and the others move, and learn how to use your small stature to your advantage. I can teach you later too, if you want. I’m sure it’ll give you confidence and expand your world a little. Like you said, this is a game, not a battle of life and death—but that’s why you should give it your all, so you’ll be ready when the time comes to fight for real.”

“Yeah! Thanks, Miss Fiene. I’ll do my best!” Fabian put on a belligerent grin like the others.

“Ahhh, this is great,” Shihono said. “Fabby-boo’s like a member of the family now. Fiene sounded just like a future marquise too!”

That was the last Fiene heard from the gods as their voices melted away like snow.

Yeah, she thought. A broken bone can be healed in a flash. If fighting is the Riefenstahl way of communication, then I’ll just heal all of the injuries that result from it. I’m sure they use their full abilities against each other so they’ll be prepared to do it when they face enemies trying to take their lives.

By resolving things one by one like this, I’ll grow up—just like how Fabian was able to let go of his wand—and become a worthy marquise. Despite having the Riefenstahl blood, I wasn’t raised here, so I’m nervous. But I’ll live here, together with everyone else.

“Even if their injuries are healed, they’ll still need warm drinks and a bath,” Fiene said. “Instead of preparing them myself, I should tell someone else to do it. Especially with this many people. I can’t leave this spot anyway. I need to get accustomed to making use of other people.”

She smiled gently and prayed to the gods from another world. “Thank you, Lady Kobayashi and Lord Endo. Please let me hear your voices again sometime. Well, if possible, it’d be nice if you’d visit His Highness next time. He’s definitely sulking. He even glares at *me* sometimes when I’m too close to Lieselotte. You’d be surprised how narrow-minded he is. You might be thinking, ‘He won’t know we came today as long as no one tells him,’ but I feel like he still might find out. He’s narrow-minded *and* his senses are too sharp for his own good. It’s such a pain.”

Somewhere far, far away—as distant as another world—the laughter of two people rang through the air.

Semester 3, February: Valentine’s Day across Worlds

It was after school on the first Valentine’s Day since Aoto Endo and Shihono

Kobayashi had confessed their feelings in front of Kuon. The couple was in Shihono's living room.

"All righty, it's Valentine's Day, so I've got chocolate brownies!" Shihono took a plate of brownies from the refrigerator. "Eat up!"

Aoto clapped his hands. "Oooh, thanks. Wait, did you make these yourself?"

"Yeah, I gave it a shot. But last year's were store-bought since I was handing them out to everyone in the club."

"I actually still have that chocolate in its original wrapping."

Shihono's eyes widened in shock. "What?! Why?! I mean, I *did* give it to you because I liked you, but I purposely made it the same as everyone else's so you wouldn't know!"

"Well, I had a crush on you and the wrapping was cute. I didn't want to ruin it by opening it. So in a way, it's a relief this year's chocolate doesn't seem like it'll keep for a long time."

Shihono nodded as she handed Aoto a fork and plate. "Yep, you gotta eat these right now. Actually, after I made them yesterday, people already started eating them. If we leave them here, someone in the house will probably devour them anyway."

"Oh, like your dad?"

"My dad did say, 'I won't let Endo have these! I'll eat all of them myself!' But I made sure to only give him one, so it's fine. Oh, but he might still be aiming for more. Sorry about the other day too. You went to the trouble of coming to meet my family, but my dad couldn't be mature about it. He just kept criticizing you..."

"But hey, he didn't hit me. He's pretty nice, isn't he?"

"No way. After that, my sister, mom, and I scolded him like crazy. Like, 'Stop picking on Endo. You're acting pathetic!' The three of us were guarding the brownies too, but my supposed allies taste-tested so many there's only these few left..."

Aoto couldn't help but smile. "Ha ha, if they're *that* good, let's split them

between us. We might as well boot up *Magikoi* while we eat.”

“That’s a good idea! It’s a special day, after all. Happy Valentine’s Day!” Shihono started up the game with practiced motions.

“Yeah, let’s have a toast while we check up on the gang. We can do it with tea for the immersion. Well, it’s bottled tea, though.” Aoto poured the tea he’d bought on the way to Shihono’s place into the glasses.

“Oh, thanks. And this is...yep, the usual *Magikoi*! I figured!” It was a normal otome game title screen, without the weird save data. Shihono was finally starting to get used to not being able to connect to the other world, but it was obvious she was only pretending to be cheerful. “A toast to Liese-tan! It’s a wonder how this villainess’s grouchy face can hide such a sweet interior!”

Aoto lifted his glass to Shihono’s. “Yeah, cheers. Lieselotte’s beauty just makes her even scarier when she’s mad, huh?”

“She’s right, though. It’s just hard to understand her because she talks in a roundabout way. Oh, and some of her harsh words are out of jealousy. Come to think of it, *Magikoi* had a nonsensical Valentine’s Day scene too. There’s a minigame where Fiene makes sweets and gives them to the guy who was her partner at the ball.”

Aoto raised an eyebrow. “Hm? That would be after the ball...in other words, after the Witch of Yore possessed Lieselotte, right?”

“Yep. Timeline-wise, it’s right in the middle of all that super serious stuff.”

“What?! How can they be so carefree?!”

Shihono pointed at him to signify her agreement. “Yeah, that’s what I wanna know! It’s like, is this really the time to be ecstatic or depressed depending on the quality of the sweets you make?! And, like, if you do well, there’s a CG of her feeding the guy! Really?! All while Lieselotte’s fallen into despair and become a witch, Baldur’s dead, and there’s chaos everywhere! It was pretty shocking...”

“The world of otome games is scary...”

The two hung their heads.

After a few moments of silence, Shihono looked up and tilted her head. “Well, since it’s an otome game world where love makes you stronger, it’s important for Fiene to deepen her bond with her partner before the final battle. Could that be why?”

“Oh, it’s to build up strength for the final battle?”

“That’s one way to think about it, but it still makes you wonder why she has to make sweets *now*. Can’t such an awfully cute minigame wait until later? Technically, it’s supposed to be a festival where commoners eat preserved sweets to weather the second half of the harsh winter. I thought it might’ve been a nonexistent event the devs shoved into the game, but when I checked with Fiene, she said it was a real festival.”

Wait, when could she have had that conversation? Aoto wondered.

“So I whispered to Sieg that February 14 is a festival of love where guys give girls flowers, since a foreign custom would suit him better. I wonder if it’ll change that weird event somehow. Oh, and I wanted to do the White Day thing with Japanese-style chocolate and make a tradition out of it, so I’ll do that on my own when you’re not around.”

This really isn’t ringing a bell. Aoto tilted his head. “Wait, when did this happen? I thought we couldn’t open that save file without both of us around.”

“It was during the ball scene, right before Lireнна appeared. Remember when you stepped out for a minute because you were getting a stomachache from nerves? That’s when.”

“What?! How could you be calm enough to teach Sieg in the middle of all that tension?!”

Shihono cackled. “Aha ha ha! Well, Sieg was pretty nervous too, so I thought I should talk about something fun he could look forward to.”

“Oh, good point. I wouldn’t have been able to do that...”

“Basically, a girl in love can be surprisingly tough and bold sometimes.” Shihono giggled. She looked at the sprite of Lieselotte—the other maiden in love—on the screen and thought about their friends in the other world.

“Ah, it’s February 14.” I remembered what Lady Kobayashi had once told me. Today was a day to commemorate love with a gift of flowers.

It was mid-February, and winter was coming to a close. Flowers were generally a luxury item at this time of year. Few bloomed in February, and greenhouses were rare. The royal palace had one, as did the estates of some noble families, but the types of flowers that could be grown in them were limited. However, going to great lengths to gift these rare flowers was precisely why they showed the depth of one’s love.

I was touched when I first heard the explanation. I remembered it as if it were yesterday. However, it had already been late autumn at the time. If it had become known this was a custom in the realm of the gods, there would have undoubtedly been chaos as people fought to obtain flowers. Thus, I had decided to wait until just after the next February 14th before announcing it, so that people would have a year to prepare.

“Would it be all right if I personally gave Lieselotte flowers this year, though?” I felt my lips curve into a smile.

“Excuse me, Your Highness.” Lieselotte gracefully lowered her head. “You said you wished to see me?”

“Yes, thank you for coming. And I’m sorry, Lieselotte. I was going to visit you myself.”

“I am well aware of how busy you are, and there is also the security detail to consider. I thought it would make more sense for me to hurry here instead.”

I could only force an awkward smile at my overly serious fiancée. There were no classes today, and I had sent a messenger to inform her of my visit in advance. Yet rather than reply, she had come to my room in the palace.

Where to begin? Her unexpected visit had thrown off my plans. I thought carefully about what to say.

“Um, I heard from Lady Kobayashi before that today, February 14, is the day her world’s saint of love was martyred. They commemorate it with a festival

called Valentine's Day."

"Oh, is that so? We ought to celebrate it here as well, then."

"That is my intention, but there's a small problem... Yes, I imagine it'd be better to tell Art so he can let the Church know, but he's the one person who isn't allowed to know today."

If my playboy of a best friend knew, he would likely walk around scattering flowers everywhere. They were already hard to obtain at this time of year, so it wouldn't be good if he were to buy all of them up on a whim. Probably.

"A...problem?" Lieselotte asked, puzzled.

I snapped back to attention. "Yes, today is apparently a day to profess and celebrate love. However, the way it's commemorated in the realm of the gods is a bit difficult to replicate here."

"Difficult..." Lieselotte muttered in a dark tone of voice, her expression stern.

I hurriedly put on a smile. "No, it's not difficult for me. However, it would be a bit of a challenge for most civilians, and if everyone were to do it at the same time, it would disrupt the market."

My fiancée tilted her head.

I grinned. "Today is...a day when men give flowers to women as an expression of love." I held out the bouquet.

She gasped and turned bright red.

"Will you accept them?" I asked, nervous.

Lieselotte's hands trembled slightly as she reached for the flowers. "I'm...so happy." The moment she took them, her soft, barely audible voice suddenly became fierce. "F-Flowers during a period of time when they're difficult to obtain? I'd expect no less from the gods! Even if that weren't the case, there is no woman who would not be delighted to receive flowers, yet men do not give them unless they have a reason to! I think it's an extremely wonderful custom! Yes, I'm sure there will be a scramble to procure flowers next year. Noblemen may even compete to see who can give the rarest flowers, making prices soar..."

Even without the Voices of the Gods, I could tell my fiancée was doing her utmost to hide her embarrassment.

Lieselotte glared when she saw me chuckle. “Are you listening, Your Highness? Personally, I believe a law must be enacted to prohibit excessive harvesting of wild plants.”

“Yes, I understand. The festival will be announced after thorough discussions with the related parties.” I laughed.

Lieselotte looked down, upset.

“I’m more interested in hearing your impressions right now. Did you like the bouquet, future crown princess?”

My fiancée blushed so quickly, I felt as if I had heard a *poof*. She bit her lip and averted her gaze. “The focal flowers are lirenes, I see.”

“Yes, I went for a white color scheme centered around lirenes. Um, I did consider if it would be better to use rarer flowers, but...”

Lieselotte shook her head. “Lirenes are more than rare enough. I’d never even seen one before Her Majesty gave me one. You can’t find them anywhere else.”

“Yet, strangely enough, they bloom all around the palace regardless of the season.” I chuckled.

My fiancée finally smiled.

“I feel proud that you always wear one of these flowers in your hair.” I touched her head and she froze. “You said it’s only a coincidence that it matches my royal seal, and that my mother gave it to you because it repels magic. However, I’m proud that my representative flower is protecting you. It’s as if I’m showing off you’re important to me, and that makes me happy. I feel that way every time I see the flower in your hair.”

Lieselotte said nothing, still blushing and frozen in place.

I slowly stroked her hair. “In order to express my feelings, it had to be these flowers. I’m sorry they’re no better than what you already have, but—”

She suddenly grabbed my hand that was petting her. “It’s not...a coincidence,” she said in a low voice.

Um, what is she referring to? What coincidence?

“I-I’m your fiancée...and I make an effort to wear your flower in my hair. That...” She trembled. “That could only be because I love you, Sieg!”

She tugged my hand, pulling me into a tight hug. I instinctively wrapped my arms around her back.

“Everyone else already knew that! Obviously, I’m very happy to wear this flower. It’s my treasure! Ugh, I just...love you so much!”

Lieselotte continued to cry out as she held me tightly. I could see the tip of her ear, and it was terribly red. As I hugged my fiancée—who was as shy and adorable as ever—I secretly offered a prayer of gratitude to the goddess who had bestowed this happiness upon me.

Chapter 3: Blessings from the Gods

“Who haven’t we talked about yet?” Lord Endo asked after we finished covering all of the events leading to this day. “Just Artur, I guess?”

Art, huh?

“In the end, Artur Richter didn’t decide on a partner to bring to our wedding, did he?” Lieselotte scoffed.

For some reason, she didn’t seem to get along well with Art. Well, it was probably because his attitude was incompatible with House Riefenstahl’s devoted, single-minded nature.

“In Art’s case, I think he’s focusing more on work than romance right now,” I said.

As his best friend, I felt obligated to defend him. In fact, after graduation, he *had* been taking his work as a priest seriously, so it wasn’t a lie...probably.

Lady Kobayashi smiled and nodded. “Oh, yeah. Art’s the kind of guy who gets pretty absorbed in his work, and he achieves a lot of success at the Church. He’s a skilled priest, after all, and his family is influential. Now that the Goddess Lirenna has taken a liking to him too, he’s basically invincible, huh?”

“Yep,” Lord Endo said. “The way I see it, Artur’s only unlucky with girls because his *job* is too hectic. In this world, priests also serve as doctors, right? Dealing with emergencies and stuff sounds stressful.”

Even Lieselotte had to acknowledge this point. “I won’t deny that. It’s true there are patients only he can save, and in those situations, he will always go to save them. Also, whenever there’s a major disaster or disease outbreak, the Church immediately sends their best priests.”

“Art’ll be the first one called, since he’s exceptional at his job,” I said. “He also has a surprisingly strong sense of responsibility, so he’ll never turn down a request. His grades at school were good, but he wouldn’t have been able to graduate if the days he was performing his priest duties weren’t recognized as

authorized absences.”

“Plus, he’s been watching over that useless goddess,” Lord Endo said. “He doesn’t have time for love. That guy’s gonna die from overwork.”

An awkward silence fell over the table. Art had been diligently protecting and taking care of the Goddess Lirenna from her revival until today’s announcement. That said, he was actually a proper, diligent priest, so he was happy to serve her. I seemed to recall him running around all over the place, acting in Lirenna’s stead as she couldn’t yet appear in public. Protecting her was hard enough already, but she was also the type to notice all sorts of problems in the world and demand Art fix them. This had gone on for the past few months straight.

Then, there was the crown prince’s suddenly scheduled wedding. It was a lot of work for the Church, especially Art.

Perhaps I’ll use my royal authority to make Art take a vacation sometime. Or would it be better to have the goddess do it, since it involves entreating the Church?

A chilly breeze blew through the air.

“The sun is beginning to set,” Lieselotte murmured.

The color of the sky indicated it was indeed close to evening. I nodded and looked at the clock tower to check the current time.

“Yes, it’s already this late,” I said. “Time flies when you’re having fun, huh? It’s a little early, but we can go inside now. It might become too cold outside.”

“Aw...” Lady Kobayashi looked sad.

I smiled at her. “Kobayashi, you’d like to see Lieselotte’s other wedding dress, wouldn’t you? Let’s prepare for the evening party early, and then we can chat some more.”

“Now that’s our considerate prince,” Lady Kobayashi said. “You aren’t Liesetan’s beloved for no reason. That was the best suggestion ever!”

“Sieg, don’t charm Shihono too much,” Lord Endo said. “And Shihono, don’t praise Sieg too much. You’re gonna make me sulk. Well, jokes aside, thanks,

Sieg.” He called it joking, but his expression said otherwise.

“Let us proceed with that plan, then,” Lieselotte said. “Lord Endo, Lady Shihono, I shall be taking my leave for a moment. Sieg too, yes?”

“Yes, I’ll get changed too,” I said. “You two can go to your rooms first. I’ll have the chamberlain take you there.”

Lady Kobayashi’s face turned pale. “Wait, Sieg, I have a bad feeling about this. These aren’t gonna be normal rooms, are they? There’ll be a couch I’m too scared to sit on because it looks like a work of art, expensive-looking vases I’m too scared to walk past... I bet I won’t even be able to step on the carpet without feeling bad.”

“Er, well, I did choose the smallest room possible so you wouldn’t be nervous. As for the quality of the furniture...I suppose you could say, this is the royal palace, so we can’t embarrass ourselves.”

“However, it’s just a room,” Lieselotte said. “You could utterly destroy it and everyone would accept it as the will of the gods.”

Well, she’s right. Not only were they gods from a foreign realm, we were greatly indebted to them. They had nothing to fear about the room.

“No, I wouldn’t break anything on purpose,” Lady Kobayashi said. “Ugh, I’m so nervous...”

“Calm down, Shihono,” Lord Endo said. “What they mean is, people will forgive you no matter what careless slipup you make. Just read *that* while you wait for them to get changed.” He patted Lady Kobayashi on the shoulder and pointed at Lieselotte’s diary.

“‘That’? Oh! I got permission to read *Lieselotte’s Memoir*, but I was so caught up in our conversation, I didn’t make any progress at all!”

Good, her attention shifted from the room to the diary.

“Okay, I’ll go to my room and read this while I wait!” Lady Kobayashi said, fidgeting.

Lord Endo looked at her with gentle eyes and smiled. “I’ll watch her read, because I don’t think I’ll ever get tired of seeing her changing expressions. Don’t

worry about us. Take your time getting changed.”

“I don’t know how I feel about that... Do I really make that many faces? Then again, I do get the feeling this diary’s gonna be super mind-blowing. Well, I agree you don’t need to worry about us, Sieg. See you later!” Lady Kobayashi waved at us.

The two gods really were close. Lord Endo probably didn’t just think Lady Kobayashi’s changing faces were entertaining—he could look at the face of his beloved for hours without getting bored.

Lieselotte and I smiled at them and stood up to leave. I was very curious about the contents of *Lieselotte’s Memoir*, but for now, I had to focus on accompanying Lieselotte herself.

April 7

Today was Prince Siegwald’s birthday!

His Highness turned eighteen, and he shone as brightly as always. He now meets the age requirement to be considered an adult, although there are many places in which he won’t officially be one until he graduates from school.

It feels as though he has gained a more mature charm as of late. His demeanor has become more composed and reliable, and his mannerisms and expressions more refined. His smile is especially unfair. When seen from the front, it’s dazzling enough to make one faint.

Dressed in formal ceremonial attire, His Highness sparkled like a fairytale prince, brimming with the grace, majesty, and charm of a future king. I had been so nervous, I did *that*. How could I have said such a thing...?

At the ceremony, I stood next to him as his fiancée as per convention. It was uneventful...I think. I couldn’t look directly at him, but as his partner, all I had to do was stand by his side. My heart was racing from start to finish, but there weren’t any issues. Probably.

The problem was with the private family gathering afterwards. Prince

Siegwald is always dashing, but he looked even more radiant there. The formal expression he wears in public is wonderful, but when he's with his family, it transforms into a soft, relaxed smile. The contrast between the two left a vivid impression on me.

I could hardly contain my love for him, when Her Majesty Queen Tiana said, "You two are old enough to get married now."

Overcome with embarrassment, bashfulness, and confusion, I said, "The other conditions aside from age haven't been met, though."

Everyone froze.

No! What I meant was that *I'm* inexperienced. *I'm* not qualified to be by Prince Siegwald's side yet. He's so gallant, gentle, and sincere. Everyone likes him, and he's always had excellent grades at school. On the other hand, I've only had a home education, and unlike him, I haven't proven myself to be superior to other nobles my age. Even my mannerisms are childish compared to his.

At any rate, when I impulsively said those words, what I meant was, "Am I worthy of marrying such a wonderful person the way I am now?!"

However...

"I still have yet to hear the Voices of the Gods," His Highness said with a weak smile. "At this rate, I won't be fit to become king. I wonder if our engagement would have to be reconsidered... House Riefenstahl wouldn't let you marry such a failure of a man."

It took everything I had to refrain from slitting my neck. The logical side of my brain knew I mustn't shed blood in the royal palace on His Highness's special day. However, I desperately wished to die.

I explained myself. At least, I think I did. I tried my best to express I had *not* been implying such a thing at all. I said the conditions I meant included His Highness's wishes and various preparations and arrangements that needed to be made. But the frozen atmosphere remained until I left, so I really should atone by dying.

Why am I like this...?

Tomorrow is the Royal Academy of Magic's entrance ceremony. I can't help but feel anxious knowing I'll have more opportunities to see His Highness than before.

I wonder if I'll be able to apologize properly for what happened today.

...

April 18

Today was rather strange.

First, after school, I saw His Highness tutoring Miss Fiene. They were in an open courtyard, in plain view of the school building. The location and circumstances were perfectly fine, and yet, the moment I saw them sitting together, I felt as though I had been *stolen* from.

All I could think was, "He belongs to *me*." I seethed with years' worth of pent-up anger and resentment—even though I had only known the girl for mere days, I felt as though I had been humiliated for tens, hundreds—no, *thousands* of years. It was excruciatingly painful, and I thought I was going to lose my mind.

But why? His Highness said there was nothing for me to worry about. Besides, he doesn't belong to me in the first place. I understand this. I don't wish for his heart. I simply want to support him, that's all. That's how it should be.

I do love him, of course. I adore him with every fiber of my being. I'm always jealous of anyone who approaches him, to the point where I want to rip them all into pieces. But I'm supposed to swallow those feelings, and I do.

Yet, for some reason, I couldn't do it today.

Obviously, I wish to get closer to His Highness, and I would love to befriend Miss Fiene as well. Which means all I had to do was say, "As a fellow student, I'd like to help her with her studies as well."

There was also the issue of the gossip surrounding Miss Fiene, which was spreading as His Highness had feared. The two of them being alone together in this situation could cause another unwanted misunderstanding, so I felt I

needed to tell them so.

However, there was absolutely no need to phrase it as maliciously as, “Could it be that you only accept lessons from handsome gentlemen?”

When I saw *him* taking *her* side, I was overcome with feelings of, “I hate him. I won’t forgive him. I love him. I’m so miserable.” It was all so ■■■■■.

I was swallowed up by ■■■■■, but the moment I was about to lash out aggressively and emotionally—in a way that surprised even myself—I suddenly felt a refreshing breeze that seemed to calm my breathing and soothe my heart. It reminded me of a forest in spring: clean, fresh, and full of life. I felt slightly at ease, as though I had been freed from something that was possessing me.

Apparently, that was when Prince Siegwald heard the Voices of the Gods. He then did something truly incomprehensible. Well, we are engaged, so it wasn’t *wrong*, and I certainly didn’t dislike it. Still, it was clearly unnatural for him to kiss me on the cheek out of the blue.

It was incomprehensible. I’m ashamed to call it that because it means despite being engaged, our relationship has dulled to the point where a kiss is considered incomprehensible, but I’ll set that aside for now. The point is that it made no sense. What in the world happened? What did the gods say for His Highness to do such a thing?

Was I really being possessed by something evil? My head is clear now, so I do think *something* was influencing me before that wind blew. How do I describe it? It was like having something dirty and unpleasant sticking to me. Something I hadn’t noticed until it was peeled off. I don’t know. I can’t fully understand it. I even feel like I might’ve been imagining it.

So why did the gods appear and have His Highness do *that*? I’ve never heard of such an exorcism technique, but perhaps the gods gave me some sort of blessing via him, which returned me to my senses. Yes, now that I think about it, His Highness would never do such a thing to me for no reason. It must’ve been something along those lines.

I’m sure he also had a reason for resuming the study session with Miss Fiene afterwards. At least, I think so. What *was* that about?

I'm certain now the kiss on the cheek was some sort of ritual. It was too sudden, and His Highness himself was bewildered. It felt as if he was being forced to follow someone's instructions—perhaps the gods'.

However, afterwards, he seemed to genuinely be enjoying himself, albeit in a mischievous way. The rest of his actions appeared to be of his own free will, which surprised me because we were in a courtyard where others could see us. He is proud of being a prince and always presents himself appropriately for his position, so why would he do such things? I don't know. I just don't know anything anymore.

Tomorrow, I'll ask him what the meaning behind that was...if I can. If I'm going to ask him about today, I'll inevitably have to bring up the events themselves... I doubt I'll be able to maintain my presence of mind. No, but still, I'm going to talk to him tomorrow.

For now, I'll just be happy that Prince Siegwald awakened to his royal abilities and can now hear the Voices of the Gods. I really am glad his efforts weren't betrayed. If he had remained unable to hear them forever, I would've hated the gods and this world.

...

September 13

I made a huge mistake. I don't know how I can possibly atone for this.

It all started when Fiene and Baldur interrogated me about my nightmares. Their questioning exposed everything—the weakness I didn't want to acknowledge, the distress I didn't want to be known, the inferiority I didn't want to be seen—and I lost my composure in the most disgraceful of ways.

Prince Siegwald must've been worried about me. He tried to comfort me by touching my cheek...with his lips. It felt like the world was being flooded with light. The dark presence tormenting me was blown somewhere far away, and at the same time, the affection I felt from him made me want to cry. But to lose consciousness? I hate how weak I am. And to think I made His Highness carry me while I slept without a care in the world! I can only describe it as a huge

mistake.

After I woke up, His Highness continued to smile gently at me as if it hadn't bothered him. His gaze was so warm, it made me conceitedly wonder if he perhaps loved me. However, I couldn't allow myself to think that when I'd caused so much trouble for him. That would be far too selfish of an interpretation.

Father and Fiene seemed to have the same false impression after seeing today's events, but such happiness can't possibly exist in reality.

However, I do think His Highness genuinely cares about me. I caused him a great deal of trouble today, but he still did so much for me, and that makes me happy. It makes my heart feel light, as though the darkness I feared for so long has weakened. I want to say it's as if multiple warm, gentle, and powerful presences are protecting me, but that would truly be conceited of me.

At any rate, I feel like I can breathe easy today. Like I've overcome something. I *should* feel heavyhearted thinking about how I'm going to apologize to His Highness, and yet I'm oddly calm right now. It's strange how I feel like I've escaped from the worst situation and everything will be all right. Is my sixth sense picking up on some kind of change outside of my own consciousness...? I can't fully understand it, but I feel like I can focus on the future now.

Starting tomorrow, I won't let the nightmares control me. I'll do everything I can for His Highness, who showed me such compassion. I'll try to make up for the trouble I caused him today.

...

October 6

Today, Prince Siegwald and I affirmed our feelings for each other.

Writing this is making me wonder if such an unbelievable miracle truly did occur, but it did indeed happen. Is today the Goddess of Fortune's birthday?

It began with the nightmare the Witch of Yore showed me last night. It was unpleasant as usual, but now, I can laugh and say it really was nothing more than a dream. My love for Prince Siegwald allowed me to succeed in driving it

away, and while I was on that emotional high, I impulsively told His Highness—may I write his name as “Sieg”? I don’t have the courage to call him that in person yet, but I do have his permission. This will be practice. Ah, I’ve gotten sidetracked.

Right, I impulsively told Sieg I loved him, and he assured me he loved me just as much. What a shock! I’m so happy, I could scream right now. I want to jump for joy and boast to everyone in the world, “Prince Siegwald loves me!”

I can’t believe such happiness exists. I don’t even know how to express my glee in words. I’m thankful for the world and the gods. I’m glad I was born. I can overcome any hardship with the happiness I obtained today.

The Witch of Yore? What’s the big deal?

A great evil that’s going to destroy the world? That’s nothing.

I’m not afraid in the slightest. The love of my life loves me back, and we’re even formally engaged. I don’t need to think about who’s stronger; it’s obviously me, the envy of all living beings. I can do anything now. I *will* do anything.

Oh no. I might be a little *too* excited. His Highness was looking at me with concern, so I need to be more prudent. Oh, but still, I can’t help but be like this. Today’s events were such an unexpected joy. Think about how much trouble I caused Sieg—and how much I ruined our relationship—with my sheer inability to be honest and my unbelievable awkwardness.

Normally, one would think to simply charm him without asking for his love. But forget trying to make him like me—I couldn’t even smile at him. I was awkward to the point where I’m not sure if the word “awkward” is even adequate.

All in all, I now realize my feelings were too strong. I was afraid if I got too close, I’d be rejected, or if I faced him head-on, I’d see hints of disgust. Most of all, he’s too dashing to look at directly! It’s been around ten years since we first met, and in all this time, I’ve never once found anything to dislike about him. He’s only continued to grow and become more wonderful by the day, gripping my heart so tightly it hurts. That’s why, with each passing day, month, and year, I became more and more lost as to how to interact with him.

Today, my emotions finally exploded, resulting in that reckless confession. It makes me wonder if I understand what “moderation” means. Why did I run from one extreme to the other?

Still, Sieg accepted me, and I’m thankful for that. For his sake as well, I’m going to obliterate the Witch of Yore. I must destroy any evil that stands in the way of the country he’s going to be ruling. If they’re targeting me, that makes things convenient. I’ll catch and defeat them when they come for me.

Now that I’ve steeled my resolve, I feel as though the darkness is trembling in fear. Well, I think it’s just the air moving from the wind outside.

It’s already late. I should sleep.

I’ll keep today’s joy in my heart. I’m not afraid of nightmares at all anymore. I have my own light.

...

April 6

Tomorrow is our long-awaited wedding day. I feel rather emotional when I think that today is my final day as Lieselotte Riefenstahl.

Looking back, around this time a year ago, I was nervous about starting school at the Royal Academy of Magic and my relationship with His Highness. Even though we had been engaged for many years, I couldn’t say things were going well between us back then. I thought the day would come when he would abandon me because of my lack of charm. He was becoming more attractive by the day, and I was terrified he’d choose someone better than me one day.

However, I was wrong. Last spring, His Highness awakened to the Royal Ear and listened to the Voices of the Gods for quite some time.



The Play-by-Play Caster Endo and Color Commentator Kobayashi... Their titles sound funny, but those are what they wish to be called, so those are their official names.

Those two brought me dizzying, unbelievably happy days. Thanks to them, Sieg understood me shockingly well and broke through my bluffs with his divine level of composure. There were times when I thought his teasing went too far, but I felt blessed the entire time. I was happy. It was a very, very fun year.

There was no strife with Sieg, Fiene, or anyone else. Even I know how inexplicably stubborn I am at times, and yet the days went by without anyone opposing or shunning me. In fact, it's the opposite. Sieg and Fiene love me, although I still sometimes wonder if I'm dreaming.

I always thought my love for Sieg was unrequited. I thought it was fine that way. But now I know how blessed and sweet it is to be loved back!

There was someone who cast a shadow over me, but Sieg and the gods dispelled them, saving me from the darkness and encouraging me to be strong.

Yes, I couldn't be happier. Starting tomorrow, I can be beside Sieg at all times. I will be his only equal in this country where he must stand above everyone else. I've longed for this position all my life, and tomorrow, it'll be mine. I'm very, very, very, *very* happy.

But that's not the end. If anything, tomorrow is a new beginning. From now on (it's extremely hard to write this, but it's definitely going to happen, so I have no choice but to write it), I'm sure we'll have quarrels, mainly because of me. Nevertheless, I'll try to build a relationship, household, and love that won't be shaken.

From a year ago until now, Sieg went through a lot of effort and hardship while following the gods' guidance. Now, it's up to me—no, *us*—to protect this ultimate happiness—the Happy End to End All Happy Ends the gods led us to—and we *will* succeed.

So please watch over us from the heavens, Play-by-Play Caster Endo and Color Commentator Kobayashi. Although, when I write their names out like this, I have reservations about calling them those, even if they wished for it

themselves.

“Awww... I’m so happy for you, Liese-tan. Good for you!”

When we returned after changing clothes, we were greeted by Lady Kobayashi sitting on the sofa, covering her face with a handkerchief as she bawled her eyes out, and Lord Endo beside her, gently patting her back.

Lord Endo glanced at us and lowered his head with an awkward smile. “Oh, sorry, guys. You must be confused. Shihono burst into tears while reading the diary. Well, they’re tears of joy, so you don’t have to worry.”

Lieselotte giggled. “It was surprising, but I couldn’t be happier to know she cares so much for us and rejoices in our happiness.”

“Yes,” I said. “It’s because of your efforts and guidance we were able to reach this point where you can say, ‘I’m so happy for you.’ Thank you again, Aoto and Kobayashi.”

“Thank you,” Lieselotte said. “I’m eternally grateful to you for bringing us together. We wouldn’t be here today if it weren’t for you.”

“No, I should be thanking you...” Lady Kobayashi groaned, burying her face deeper in the handkerchief.

“Shihono, you’re crying too much,” Lord Endo said. “You’re gonna get a headache. Well, I know you’re really attached to the game, so I’m not blaming you. You were so desperate to find a happier ending that you tried everything you could think of, didn’t you? Like that weird solo clear.”

“Yeah... I even wrote fanfics, thinking if the devs wouldn’t give Liese-tan a happy ending, *I* would. So seeing the real Liese-tan—and *Lieselotte’s Memoir*—have such a ridiculously happy ending makes me...so relieved...”

“Ahhh, that just made the crying worse... Shihono, you’re probably sobbing more than the parents of the bride and groom. Look, Sieg and Lieselotte already came back from changing. Shouldn’t you stop crying so you can talk to them?”

Lady Kobayashi looked up, but her eyes were red and the tears she was trying to hold back were still streaming down her face.

“Thank you so much,” I said. The words of gratitude came out again naturally.

“Yes, thank you,” Lieselotte said. “I’m so grateful, I don’t know how I can ever repay you.”

Lady Kobayashi smiled weakly, shaking with sobs. “Oh no, you don’t need to thank us. As long as you two are happy, nothing else matters! If anything, I’m grateful to be able to see you happy together! Oh, and those outfits are wonderful.”

“Yeah, she’s right,” Lord Endo said. “We’re friends, so don’t worry about it.” His eyes were also teary and red. His voice trembled slightly as he spoke. “But I want you to know your Happy End to End All Happy Ends was an incredible miracle. That’s why Shihono’s reacting like this. Take good care of Lieselotte, Sieg.”

“Yes, that goes without saying, Aoto,” I said. “Lieselotte will have my eternal love. I will cherish her for my entire life, so as to not ruin the happiness you’ve given us.”

“A-And Liese-tan, don’t be too stubborn, all right?” Lady Kobayashi said. “Well, I know that’s what makes you cute, but a tsundere has to show her soft side too! If you’re sweet on Sieg every now and then, you can turn him into a sappy pile of mush.”

“After all, you’re such a great girl that even a goddess from another world was praying for your happiness,” Lord Endo said.

“That’s so true! I just want you to be happy forever...” Lady Kobayashi began to cry again.

Lieselotte gave a firm nod. “Yes, I vow to protect this bond you forged for us, this happiness you brought us, and my b-beloved Sieg forever.” She spoke with dignity, like a true Riefenstahl.

I hugged her tightly without thinking. “I’m so happy, Lieselotte. Ha ha, it’s almost like a second wedding vow. No, I suppose it really is one. We have a bride and groom, swearing an oath in front of the gods. Up close and personally, in this case.”

“Oh my. We must never break this oath, then.” Lieselotte giggled.

“Huh?” Lady Kobayashi wiped her tears as Lord Endo wrapped his arm around her shoulders. “Wait, we’ll give you all the blessings we can! As many times as it takes! If we really do have divine powers, I wanna pray that your oath will last forever, and that it’ll never be defeated by anything that tries to get in the way!”

“Shihono! Something actually appeared. What is that? Light coming from the sky? It’s raining down on Lieselotte and Sieg, but like, it’s going through the ceiling? That’s scary.”

Light came down from the heavens, surrounding me and Lieselotte. It was similar to the light we’d seen about a year ago in the academy’s dining hall, when Lieselotte and Baldur had received divine blessings.

Lady Kobayashi’s light was gentle and soft. Lord Endo’s was gentle as well, but it also felt somehow powerful. The mystical combination of their lights engulfed us in endless warmth, and we could only stare at it in awe.

“Huh? Light?” Lady Kobayashi looked up. “Whoa, you’re right! So pretty... Well, I don’t know what’s going on, but it looks like a good thing, so I guess it’s fine? I’m sure it means their marriage has the gods’ approval and blessing.” She grinned happily.

“You probably gave them your blessing, and I guess I did too,” Lord Endo said. “I have no idea how any of this works...”

Lieselotte slipped out of my arms. “Well, while you may have done it unknowingly, the fact is you gave us your approval. That means anyone who would try to interfere with our oath will be branded a traitor. As someone with a jealous streak strong enough to embody a witch, I’d love to have this recorded in official law...”

“That’s that, then!” Lord Endo said.

“No objections here!” Lady Kobayashi said.

I realized Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi really were our age, though they still had their childish innocence. Still, to me, they were greater, more likable, and more precious than any other gods. I was glad we were able to swear an oath in front of them.

Lieselotte called herself jealous, but even I was narrow-minded when it came to her. Besides, I was merely a crown prince, while she was a saint who had brought about the revival of Lirennia the Goddess of Creation and had the blessing of a goddess from a foreign realm, Lady Kobayashi.

The light just now could be used to discourage others from getting between us. It was a miracle that had occurred in the palace, so there must've been witnesses. The Goddess of Creation and the priests who accompanied her were sensitive to divine phenomena.

Those selfish thoughts ran through my head. However, even if the light hadn't come—even if Lady Kobayashi and Lord Endo were only, as they had claimed, regular high school students rather than gods—it wouldn't change the fact they were our dear friends who had led us to this Happy End to End All Happy Ends.

Thus, more than anything, I felt happy, proud, joyful, and even lucky we were able to reach this day—this moment—together. With the oath we made earlier in my heart, I renewed my resolve to walk hand in hand with Lieselotte, treasuring this happiness.

Final Chapter: The Play-by-Play Caster Endo and Color Commentator Kobayashi

The wedding of Crown Prince Siegwald and Saint Lieselotte concluded with a ball.

On the balcony, away from the hustle and bustle of the venue, two otherworldly deities known as the Play-by-Play Caster Endo and Color Commentator Kobayashi were reflecting on the day's events.

The Goddess of Creation, Lireнна, softly descended to the balcony from the darkness of night. "Have you had enough of the ball?"



Aoto and Shihono nodded, satisfied.

“Yeah,” Aoto said. “If we were there, the stars of the show would spend all their time with us. That’d definitely make us feel bad.”

“Yep,” Shihono said. “We didn’t think we’d be able to stick around this long anyway. Liese-tan’s dance with Sieg was beautiful... Not only were they graceful, they were perfectly in sync. I got to see that and say hi to everyone here, so I’m totally satisfied! Is our time up?”

“Yes.” Lireнна nodded, apologetic. “It’s getting hard to sustain your manifestations here. You’ll be returning to your world soon. I’m sorry. Today, I was able to take in a lot of people’s joyful feelings and congratulations towards my revival, so I thought I could do a little better than this, but...”

Like clockwork, she tried to get on her knees and beg for forgiveness, only to be interrupted by Aoto and Shihono’s laughter.

“What’re you talking about?” Aoto asked. “You don’t have to apologize. You already did your best. We’re grateful you brought us here at all, let alone for this long. Thanks, Lireнна.”

“Yeah!” Shihono said. “It seems like you did a lot for us on the side too. Thanks so much, Lireнна.” She squeezed the goddess’s hand, preventing her from kneeling.

Lireнна’s golden eyes were wet with moved, apologetic tears. She looked down and whispered, “I’m the one who must thank you. It’s all because of you two that I was able to revive in this form instead of destroying the world. I really don’t think I’ve done enough for you, seeing as I had to rely so much on mere children, and caused so much trouble with Kuon...” At this point, she had gone past “looking down” and was lowering her head again.

“You’re always so quick to apologize. Do you like groveling that much?” Shihono gave a forced laugh.

“Yes. It’s relaxing. Since I am this planet itself, when my forehead touches the ground, I feel like I’m at home. You could say kneeling is my default position. Oh, but my feelings of apology and gratitude come first, of course.”

Aoto and Shihono gave strained smiles.

“Uh, try to have some more dignity, Goddess of Creation,” Aoto said. “I mean, you’re a powerful being who’s lived long enough to call us high school third-years ‘mere children.’”

“I wonder if we blamed you too much for the Witch of Yore thing,” Shihono said. “You’re basically done for if groveling’s your default position. Think of it from another perspective, Lireнна. We’re applying to universities this year, so we’re gonna be really grateful for the good luck you blessed us with. That’s more than enough to make it up to us.”

The goddess straightened her back at last and smiled gently. “That’s reassuring to hear. Let me just say it one last time, then: on behalf of this world, thank you so much.”

“Thank you too.” Aoto nodded solemnly.

“Yep, thanks,” Shihono said. “This is the end, huh?” She gave a sad smile.

“Well, for today, that is,” Lireнна said. “And I’m going to try one more thing after this! Please open the game when you get back!” She grinned, smug.

Shihono and Aoto tilted their heads.

“Huh?” Shihono said. “I don’t really get it, but sure, we’ll open it. Oh...”

“Yeah, looks like we’re fading away,” Aoto said. “I guess we’ll wake up in our world soon.”

“It really feels like we were dream—”

—

“—ing...”

Before Shihono could finish her sentence, the pair’s consciousnesses returned to the real world. They were in the Kobayashis’ living room. Lireнна had instructed them to sit side by side on the sofa and lean back as if they were taking an afternoon nap, and they woke up in the very same positions.

Even though night had fallen in the other world, it was just as bright here as it had been when they left.

“Mm, oh, we’re back?” Aoto rummaged in his pocket for his phone. “How much time passed... Huh? It’s only been like ten minutes?”

“Whew, that startled me,” Shihono said. “It happened so suddenly. I have no idea what went on on the way there and back. The passage of time is a mystery too. Oh, right. We have to open the game!” She clapped her hands together and approached the game console connected to the TV.

“Oh, yeah, Lireнна said something about that. I wonder what it could be?” Aoto tilted his head. The two students started up the game as usual.

“Who knows? Hmm, I don’t see the weird quicksave we used before to connect to their world. I doubt we’re supposed to start a new game, so I guess we should check the gallery or the regular save data? Wait, what’s this?”

“The regular save files can be loaded as many times as you want, right? This funny-looking one didn’t exist before, did it?”

“Nope. I’ll try opening it.” Shihono gulped as she slowly pressed the button.

The loading time was awfully long. Shihono and Aoto adjusted their sitting positions on the sofa and watched with bated breath.

The screen gradually brightened, showing the interior of the church where Siegwald and Lieselotte had had their wedding ceremony. A mystical light shone down from the heavens.

In the center stood a divine, beautiful woman: Lireнна, the Goddess of Creation. She cleared her throat. “For you two, I’m sure it’s only been a few minutes since we last spoke, but several days have passed in our world. My strength has recovered a little, and combined with the recognition you received from many people the other day, I was able to connect to your world today.”

They were connected. Shihono impulsively shouted for joy, but Lireнна looked down, apologetic.

“However, since my power is lacking, this is essentially a one-way video message. I’ll make sure you can watch it as many times as you want, though, so you don’t have to worry about that. Now then, let’s start with my message.” Lireнна took a deep breath to switch gears and smiled. “Once again, thank you. Honestly, I have so much to be grateful for that I don’t know what to say, but at

any rate, I'm really thankful. Also, if we continue to speak our wishes and pray, they'll actually come true, so I'll go ahead and promise we'll meet again. See you next time!"

Lirennna waved and lowered her head. Then she motioned for someone to take her place as she disappeared off-screen.

"Um, over here? They can see me if I stand in this spot?"

The confused person slipping into the frame was Fiene. She was holding hands with a well-built man—presumably Baldur—whose face was cut off due to their height difference.

Fiene straightened her back and laughed shyly. "This is kind of embarrassing, huh? But thank you again, Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi, for teaching me things and protecting my beloved big sister, Lieselotte!" Her smile was bursting with cheer. However, a moment later, she looked down and continued quietly, "I was really scared I'd have to fight my lovely big sister, who's cute, beautiful, kind, and capable of everything except expressing her love. Thank you for changing her fate. Let's meet again! Oh, but I'd appreciate it if you kept your voice down a bit next time!"

Aoto and Shihono chuckled at the playful request.

"We were shouting a lot, huh?" Aoto said. "I guess we were bothering the ones who had to listen to us all the time. Yeah, let's watch our volume next time."

"Sieg didn't seem annoyed, but there were a lot of times when Fiene had a 'They're so loud!' look on her face," Shihono said.

The camera then shifted diagonally upwards, showing that Fiene's partner was indeed Baldur.

"Oh, I'm next?" he said. "Thank you, oh great gods, for protecting the hearts of my cousin, Lieselotte, and my fiancée, Fiene. I even heard it's thanks to you that I'm alive right now. I will continue to better myself so as to not disgrace the blessing you bestowed upon me, and I will protect the crown prince and his wife together with Fiene."

"Sir Bal, you're too stiff! Also, aren't you straying off topic? You're only

supposed to be thanking them.”

“Oh, sorry.” Baldur gave an awkward, apologetic smile. “I’m not very good at this kind of thing. Lieselotte is always lecturing me about it, so I know I’m too curt. It’s a miracle I didn’t have to lose anything in order to hold my beloved’s hand like this. Thank you for your benevolence and guidance. I look forward to the day we meet again.” He lowered his head deeply.

Shihono smiled warmly. “That’s Bal for you: honest and awkward. Well, he differs from the in-game Bal in that he doesn’t have a death wish anymore.”

“Yeah,” Aoto said. “But it’s a good change, so we can call it an evolution. Oh, is Art next?”

Artur, the priest, quietly replaced the couple on the screen. “Gods from a foreign realm, Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi, I thank you for the miracles you have performed. Also, Lady Kobayashi—or rather, Shihono, you were sooo cute! You seem like the endlessly cheerful type, yet you also have a mysterious air about you that caught my attention and made my heart skip a beat! I couldn’t talk to you much since Lord Endo was shielding you all the time, but I’d like to chat more the next time we meet!”

“He’s not her bodyguard; he’s her *boyfriend*,” came Lieselotte’s cold voice from off-screen. “There isn’t any room for you between them, Artur Richter.”

Artur slapped his hand against his forehead and looked up to the heavens in despair. “Wow, really? Well, I did get the feeling that was the case. All the cute girls in the world get snatched up so fast. Please grant me an encounter too, oh gods.”

Aoto and Shihono smiled awkwardly at the priest who was praying to them with practiced motions.

“He’s such a flirt!” Aoto said. “He couldn’t even maintain his serious priest mode for ten seconds.”

“Well, that’s Art. All right, I’ll pray for him to meet someone nice too!”

“Yeah, I hope he does too. It has to be someone absolutely perfect for him, so he won’t make eyes at you anymore.”

“Aha ha ha! You don’t have to worry about that. We literally live in different worlds. He isn’t being serious anyway.”

“But he’s attractive, high-ranking, *and* a good guy! I don’t think I can win against him even if we’re in different worlds, so I don’t want him to hit on you...”

“Huh? But you’re the coolest in my eyes, Aoto.”

“Shihono...”

The romantic mood was interrupted by an upbeat voice. “Thank you, Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi! I hear it’s because of you that I met Miss Liese and Ceci. Thank you very much!”

Aoto and Shihono looked back at the screen to see a nervous Fabian. Next to him was a calm-looking Cecilie.

“I thank you for allowing me to meet Fabian, and I also thank you on behalf of all of Lieselotte’s younger sisters,” Cecilie said. “I’ll protect Fabian for the rest of my life, so don’t worry about him. You can rest easy and wait for your next reunion with Lieselotte and the others.”

“Cecilie, if you plan on becoming a full-fledged knight, you should be more careful with your wording,” came Lieselotte’s tired-sounding voice.

The young girl merely shrugged and said nothing as she left the frame, pulling Fabian by the hand.

“Cecilie! That was rude to Lady Shihono and Lord Endo!”

Shihono shook her head at Lieselotte’s scolding. “They’re like a pair of adorable dolls! So powerful! Just seeing them is a sight for sore eyes, so it wasn’t rude at all!”

“I feel like they’re powerful in more ways than one,” Aoto said. “I mean, the boy’s got incredible firepower, and the girl’s a Riefenstahl princess. I know looks can be deceiving, but this is going overboard.”

“Hmm, but Fabby-boo isn’t the aggressive type, and Cechy-tan doesn’t care about anything except him. They probably wouldn’t go out of their way to accomplish military feats. I think Fiene and Bal are stronger in the

straightforward sense.”

“Oh, you’ve got a point. Wait, what the heck?” Aoto’s eyes widened. “He came too?”

The man on the screen was wearing a cat-shaped mask. “Why was I called here? I don’t care about some gods from another world.” It was the masked mage Karlchen—in other words, Leon.

“You were called because the two of them were worried about you,” Lireнна said, off-screen. “Also, they’re your comrades-in-arms who defeated the Witch of Yore with you!”

Even with half of his face covered by the mask, it was clear Leon was annoyed.

“Oh. Well, thanks for incapacitating the Witch of Yore, then. Is that what I’m supposed to say? Honestly, the whole thing was a huge letdown, so I’d rather complain...and I’m not really hoping to meet you again. I’m an adult already, so I’ll do what I want. Oh, but do continue to look after the students, including the ones who just graduated.”

Leon sighed and walked off.

“Well...it does seem like I got to reunite with the love of my life because you asked for me. That’s the one thing I’ll be grateful for. Thank you.”

“Huh?” Shihono asked. “He reunited with the love of his life?! What?! I’m so curious!”

“The game didn’t have anything like that, right?! C’mon, Leon, don’t just drop that bombshell and leave! If you feel the slightest bit grateful to us, explain yourself!”

Technically, they couldn’t be sure Leon had said those words, since he’d moved off-screen and the voice was barely audible. However, the man did not return. Instead, the next person to appear was Marquis Bruno Riefenstahl.

“Thank you, Lord Endo and Lady Kobayashi. As the head of House Riefenstahl, protectors of this nation, and above all, as Lieselotte’s father, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. And I must apologize for being a worthless father. I was

so eager to take up post as general and marquis—the path I aspired to, that my brother was supposed to take—that I neglected my family. Because of that, Lieselotte suffered...” Bruno lowered his head deeply.

His next motion wasn’t visible on-screen, but he was probably wiping tears from his eyes.

He then stuck out his chest. “The way things are, I doubt I’ll be able to spare time for my grandchildren! I intend to gradually pass my official duties on to my successors. From now on, I swear to protect Lieselotte and the rest of my precious family. Please be witnesses to my vow.”

Lieselotte panicked. “Wh— Grandchildren?! F-Father, it’s much too soon!”

“It would be rather inconvenient for me if you stepped down from both posts, but if that’s your reasoning, I can’t blame you.” Siegwald chuckled.

Aoto and Shihono couldn’t see the married couple’s expressions, but they easily recognized their voices. They laughed cheerfully, as did Bruno.

As Bruno walked off-screen, Lieselotte’s disapproving voice came closer. “Good grief, father...”

Siegwald walked gallantly into the frame, wearing a tuxedo and unable to stop smiling at his wife’s adorableness. Lieselotte appeared at almost the same time, accompanying him in the same wedding dress she’d worn at the ceremony which had been held in this very church. Her cheeks were flushed with embarrassment, and Siegwald regarded her with loving eyes.

The crown prince turned to face the camera. “Since I was able to chat with you directly at the tea party the other day, I’ll make my message brief. Thank you so much, you two, for meeting us, kindly watching over us, guiding us to this point, and coming to our wedding. Let us meet again sometime, my friends.” He smiled radiantly and then stepped aside, letting his wife take the center of the screen.

Lieselotte adjusted the hem of her dress, and, having regained her composure, straightened her back and smiled softly. “Now then, I have the honor of the last message. You’ve read my diary, so I’m sure you already know everything I would like to say. Thus, I shall be brief as well. We have you to

thank for that wonderful day, and I was thrilled you were able to see us in our finest hour. Really, thank you so much. I look forward to seeing you again.” She lowered her head deeply, then twirled on the spot, showing off the wedding dress that Shihono had gazed intently at while saying, “I could look at this for hours.”

When the dress’s hem settled, Lieselotte looked sweetly in one direction, signaling to Siegwald to come back. He was followed by Lireнна, Fiene, Baldur, Artur, Fabian, Cecilie, and Bruno, who stood behind them.

“Leon’s missing,” Aoto said. “Did he already leave?”

“Maybe,” Shihono said. “That’d be a very ‘Professor Leon’ thing to do.”

Everyone on-screen lowered their heads. It was like a curtain call, and the two realized the transmission was coming to an end. Even though they’d been told it was a one-way connection, they felt the need to express their own feelings as well.

“Thanks from us too, everyone!” Shihono said. “Let’s meet again!”

“Thanks, and yeah, let’s meet again!” Aoto said.

At that exact moment, Siegwald nodded as if he’d heard them.

Shihono could no longer hold back her tears. “Ugh, I’m gonna miss them...”

“Yeah, no matter the circumstances, it’s gonna be lonely without them.” Aoto wrapped his arm around her shoulder to comfort her, but he himself was looking up at the ceiling, desperately trying not to spill his own tears.

The screen went dark and the game’s credits roll began to play.

Aoto was the first to notice something was off. “Huh? Wait, what? Sh-Shihono! The screen! Look at the screen!”

“What? I’ve seen this a million times. It’s the normal credits ro— Wait, no, it’s not!”

Shihono had watched the closing credits of *Love Me Magically!* so many times, she had them memorized. The names and job titles of the people involved in the game’s development scrolled from the bottom of the screen to the top, and normally, the sequence would have reached the final “Thank You”

by now.

Gods from Another World

The Hero Who Saved the World with His Play-by-Play and the Sage Who Protected Everything with Her Color Commentary

Kind Providers of Expert Advice

Key Achievers of the Happy End to End All Happy Ends

Our Dear Friends

Job titles they'd never seen before slowly scrolled across the screen as if they'd always been there. And finally...

The Play-by-Play Caster Endo and the Color Commentator Kobayashi

Names that couldn't possibly be taken seriously had been recorded in the official history books of a certain country in a certain world. Upon seeing them, the Play-by-Play Caster Endo and the Color Commentator Kobayashi burst into emotional tears and laughter simultaneously.



Afterword

First, thank you for picking up this book. My name is Enoshima Suzu.

This new volume of *Endo and Kobayashi Live! The Latest on Tsundere Villainess Lieselotte* (*TsunLiese* for short) comes after three years and four months. It's been a while. The thought that this series, which ended cleanly without any loose ends, would receive a new installment would normally be absurd. To be honest, I was surprised too. I think it's thanks to the *TsunLiese* anime adaptation (slated to begin January 2023), and most of all, the support from the readers. Thank you.

This book was mainly supposed to be a compilation of the short stories released as store bonuses, but this and that happened, and strangely enough, about two thirds of it ended up being freshly written content.

Allow me to explain the “this and that.” The main story of *TsunLiese* was finished in two volumes, but in hindsight (I had three years and four months to think about it, after all), there were parts I felt were incomplete. “What exactly was the meaning of this foreshadowing? Isn't this part skipping ahead too much? What happened to this character after the story ended?” I'm sure some of you have had these questions, and I was overrun with thoughts of, *I want to answer those questions! I want to write about this and that!* As a result, I wound up writing more original content. It just happened.

Also, please allow me to explain one more thing about this book. In the *Lieselotte's Memoir* section, certain words are blacked out with squares or italicized to indicate the Witch of Yore's influence, but please note that this rule doesn't extend to other parts of the book, which I wrote without much consideration of it.

By the way, Lieselotte looks gorgeous in her wedding dress on the front cover, doesn't she? When I first saw it, I cried a little because it was so beautiful. Thank you to the artist, Eihi, who has drawn many wonderful illustrations for this book.

Thank you to my editor O, and to everyone else at Kadokawa BOOKS. I needed their assistance a lot again, which they graciously provided.

My sincere thanks to everyone involved with the production of the anime and manga as well, including the manga artist Sakaki Rumiwo.

There are quite a lot more people involved with *TsunLiese* now. What a blessed series, that there are so many people willing to enliven it with me. It has me trembling with joy.

Thank you to Komori Kiri-chan, Arurun, Ancient Mi, Yummy-looking meat bun, James Richman, Shingo, Dottan, and all of my other friends.

And my biggest thanks to my family and my beloved dog, Milk.

Goodbye, and see you again.



This wedding, attended and blessed by the gods, would proudly be added to our country's history books as one of the many miracles and feats achieved by the Play-by-Play Caster Endo and Color Commentator Kobayashi.

Endo and Kobayashi
THE LATEST ON TSUNDERE VILLAINESS
LIESELOTTE

Live!

Disc
Ex



The sudden voice made my shoulders flinch in surprise. I hurriedly looked in its direction and saw my fiancée, Lieselotte.

"It's good to put your feelings into words every now and then. If you keep them bottled up, they stagnate, strain, and distort... By the time you notice, you might not be able to do anything about it anymore. Just look at me. I was nearly possessed by the Witch of Yore."



Endo and Kobayashi Live! The Latest on Tsundere Villainess Lieselotte
Anime Adaptation Commemorative Visual

Endo and Kobayashi
THE LATEST ON TSUNDERE VILLAINESS
LIESELOTTE

Live!

Disc

[Ex]

Author
Suzu Enoshima
Illustrator
Eihi





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Endo and Kobayashi Live! The Latest on Tsundere Villainess Lieselotte
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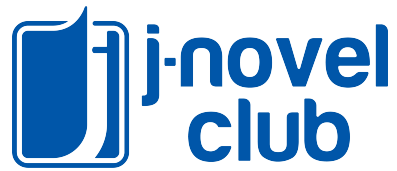
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Endo and Kobayashi Live! The Latest on Tsundere Villainess Lieselotte: Disc EX
by Suzu Enoshima

Translated by Minna Lin Edited by Hendra Boerma

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